GC
～THE CIVILIZATION BLASTER～
絶園のテンペスト
4
原作 城平京
構成 左有秀
作画 彩崎廉
SQEX
1021

SQUARE ENIX

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GC ガンガンコミックス

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~THE CIVILIZATION BLASTER~

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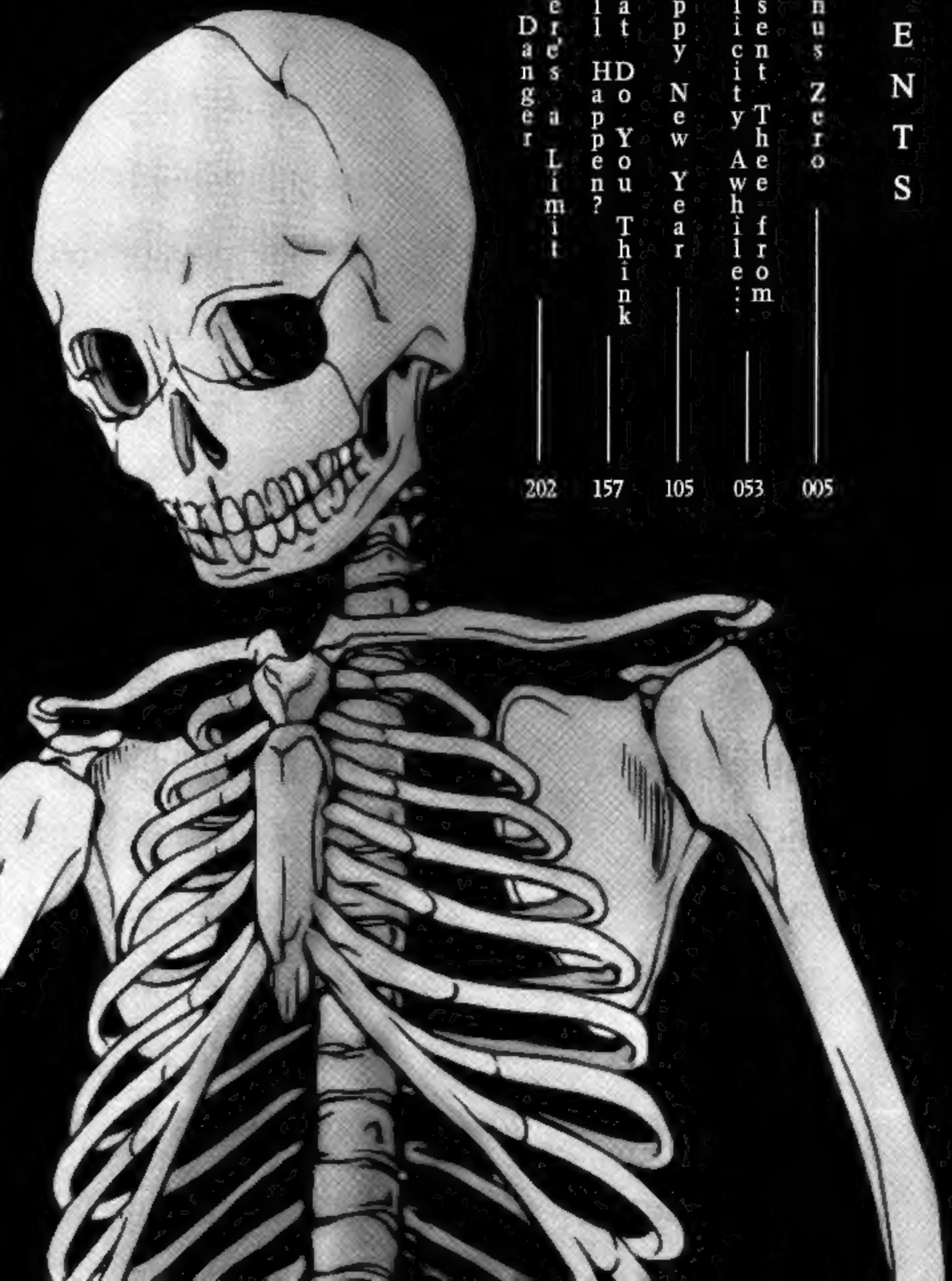

Chapter 15 - "Minus Zero"

"A magician of Zetsuen" ...
YOU SAY...?

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ゴゴゴゴゴゴゴゴ

Mahiro...
IS THERE REALLY SOMEONE LIKE THAT?!
AND DESPERATELY TRIED TO SEAL ME AWAY?
WHY DO YOU THINK THAT SAMON AND HIS MEN FEARED ME, THE PRINCESS OF THE CLAN,
MY BIRTH IS PROOF THAT THE TREE OF BEGINNINGS' AWAKENING IS NEAR.
BECAUSE I'M RESPONSIBLE FOR DETERMINING WHEN IT COMPLETES ITS AWAKENING!

IF I DON'T PERFORM THE APPROPRIATE PROCEDURES AT A CERTAIN TIME, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TREE'S WILL...
THE "TREE OF BEGININGS" CANNOT AWAKEN COMPLETELY!
THAT TIMING IS ENTRUSTED TO ME, A HUMAN!
THAT'S WHY THEY SEALED ME AWAY...
TO DELAY THAT COMPLETE AWAKENING!
WHY WAS IT ENTRUSTED TO HAKAZE-SAN...?
EVEN TO A GOD, AWAKENING IS A MAJOR UNDERTAKING.
IT WOULDN'T DECIDE SOMETHING LIKE THAT ON ITS OWN!
WHEN IT LOOKS LIKE A GOOD TIME TO AWAKEN, EVEN FROM A HUMAN PERSPECTIVE...
THEN SOME THOUGHT WOULD HAVE BEEN PUT INTO ITS AWAKENING!

NO...BUT PRINCESS!
WOULD BE A MERCILESS EXISTENCE THAT WOULD SIMPLY CONSUME ALL OF CIVILIZATION AND SNUFF OUT ALL LIFE!
THERE'S NO WAY THAT THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS," WHICH HAS THOUGHT THINGS OUT TO SUCH AN EXTENT

HOW CAN SOMEONE LIKE YOU...
BE CAPABLE OF KNOWING THE "CORRECT" TIME AND CIRCUM-STANCES!

YOU'RE JUST BLINDLY BELIEVING IN THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS"
YOU CAN'T EVEN SEE THE DANGER IN FRONT OF YOU!

THAT'S NOTHING MORE THAN A FAIRY TALE!
THAT THE "TREE OF BEGIN-NINGS" HAS ENTRUSTED THINGS TO HUMAN WILL...

...

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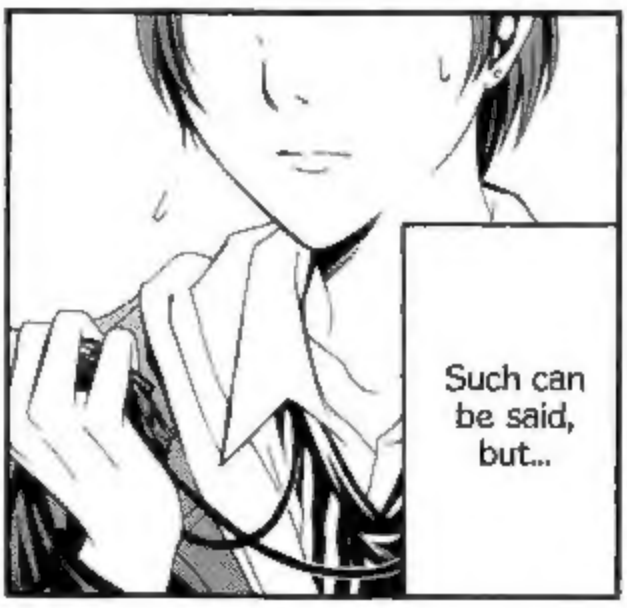
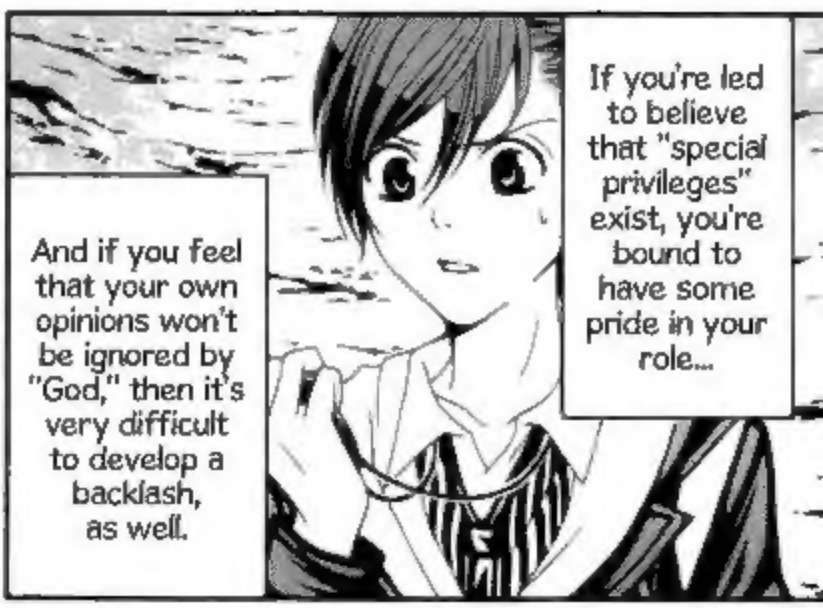
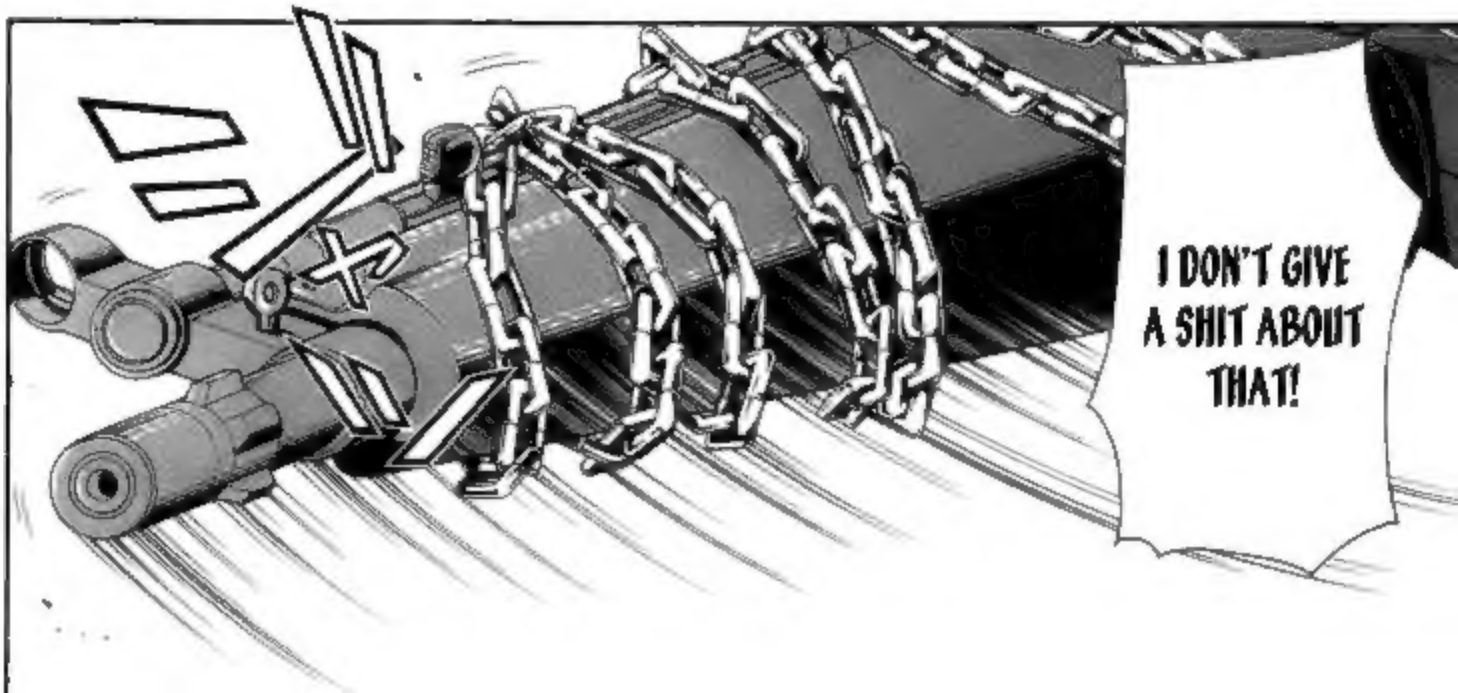
TO BETTER CONTROL THE KUSARIBE CLAN, WHO ARE FORCED TO WATCH OVER THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN"...
WE'RE MADE TO THINK THAT SUCH SORT OF SPECIAL PRIVILEGE EXISTS/

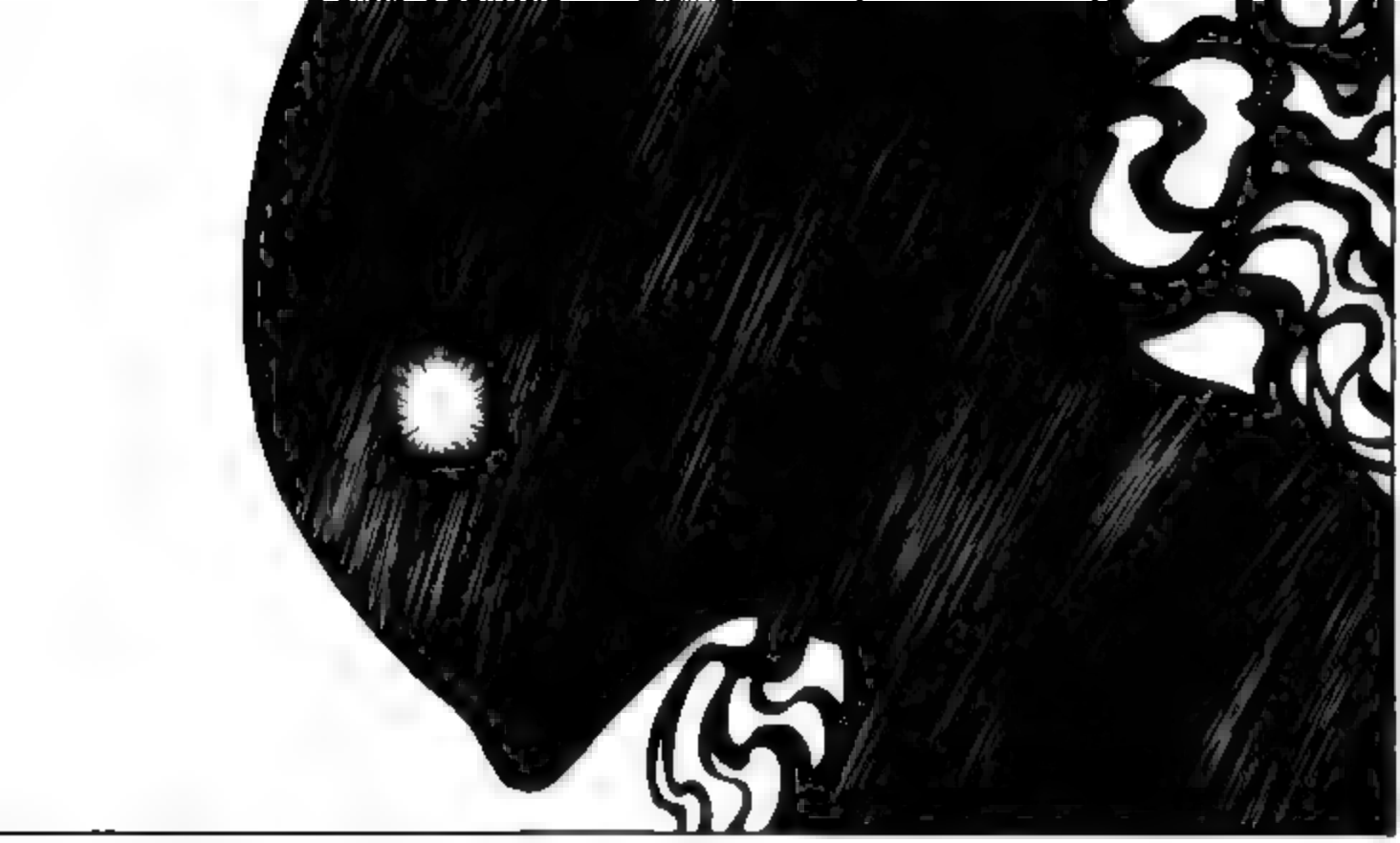

Such can be said, but...


If you're led to believe that "special privileges" exist, you're bound to have some pride in your role...
And if you feel that your own opinions won't be ignored by "God," then it's very difficult to develop a backlash, as well.


I DON'T GIVE A SHIT ABOUT THAT!

IS THERE REALLY A "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN"...
OR NOT?!
WHEN THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN" FEELS ITS IMPENDING RESURREC-TION...
.....
I CAN'T DENY THE POSSI-BILITY...
THAT AMONGST HUMANITY, IT MIGHT ALLOW THE AWAKENING OF A PERSON THAT CAN USE THE POWER OF DESTRUCTION.

WITH THAT DESTRUCTIVE POWER, IT CAN ACCELERATE ITS OWN AWAKENING... AND DEPENDING ON THE CIRCUM-STANCES...
IT MIGHT EVEN BE POSSIBLE FOR IT TO FORM AN OFFSHOOT OF ITSELF, IN THE FORM OF A HUMAN, WHICH IS CAPABLE OF KILLING THE PRINCESS THAT DETERMINES THE AWAKENING OF THE "TREE OF BEGIN-NINGS"!



THERE IS INDEED A POSSIBI-LITY THAT A "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN" MAY HAVE BEEN BORN.
AS THE RESUR-RECTION OF THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN" APPRO-ACHES

JUST LIKE HOW THE PRINCESS WAS BORN
IN REACTION TO THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" NEARING ITS AWAKENING...

THAT'S THE ONLY POSSIBILITY YOU CAN THINK OF...
.. BUT LOOKING AT THE CURRENT SITUATION

THERE'S NO CERTAINTY THAT THIS "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN" IS THE ONE THAT KILLED YOUR SISTER!
BUT THAT'S JUST FOR THE SAKE OF ARGU-MENT!

What a thing to have happened...

If the "magician of Zetsuen" is indeed the culprit...
Then Samon's argument will be turned over on its head!

YEAH...

IF THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN" IS THE CULPRIT.
THEN THE ARGUMENT THAT HE WAS MANIPULATED BY THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" INTO KILLING AIKA CAN'T BE TRUE ANYMORE, RIGHT?

CURRENTLY, THE TREE OF BEGINNINGS' MAGICAL INVESTIGATION HAS NOT TURNED UP A CULPRIT.
THEREFORE... IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO THINK THAT ONE THAT IS AN OFFSHOOT OF THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN" COULD BE CONTROLLED BY THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS."
IN THIS WORLD, ONLY THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN" IS SAID TO HAVE THE POWER TO SURPASS THE NATURAL LAWS OF THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS."
AND NATURALLY CAME UP WITH THE IDEA OF TYING HAKAZE AND I TOGETHER.
AND AFTERWARDS, THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" FELT THAT IT COULD USE THIS
THEREFORE...
THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN" JUST HAPPENED TO KILL AIKA
IN FACT, ON THE CONTRARY, THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN" HOLDS A LOT OF RESPONSIBILITY...
AIKA-CHAN'S DEATH...
HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS."
IF THAT'S THE CASE...

IF THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN" FELT ITS RESUR-RECTION APPROA-CHING
AND THUS THE "MAG.-CAN OF ZETSUEN" WAS BORN
FURTHER-MORE...
THEN YOU, KUSARIBE SAMON, WHO'S BEEN AGGRES-SIVELY PURSUING THIS RESUR-RECTION...
ULTIMATELY CAUSED AIKA'S DEATH AS WELL.
.....

If the "Magician of Zetsuen" is the culprit
Then Samon's reasoning just now that Mahiro should defeat the "Tree of Beginnings"...
I see...
Every-thing's starting to make sense!
Just like that...
Mahiro flips the logic around so that the "Tree of Zetsuen" should be defeated, instead!
SO THE ONE I REALLY SHOULD TAKE REVENGE UPON S THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN"
AND YOU, HAVING DIRECTED ITS RESUR-RECTION, WILL BECOME A TARGET FOR REVENGE, AS WELL.
Then... Mahiro no longer has any reason to assist Samon's side.

has been decided!
Samon's loss...
IT SEEMS LIKE YOU'RE STUCK.
SAMON
AND THEN I'LL RETURN THERE!
IS FOR ME TO FIND THE "OFFERING"!
ALL THAT'S LEFT...

Is this really happening?
The argument I put forth in rebuttal
Was completely turned over on me!
The natural laws of a world governed by the "Tree of Beginnings"?
Are these...

THINGS THAT LOOK LIKE PORTIONS OF A LARGE TREE...
ARE APPEARING ALL OVER THE PLACE, YOU SAY?!
IS IT BECAUSE OF THE "FRUIT"?
HUH? THE METAL TRANSFORMATION PHENOMENON ISN'T HAPPENING?
ON THE CONTRARY, THESE "TREES"
ARE ABSORBING THE LIVING THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN TURNED INTO METAL!

I HAVEN'T HEARD OF THIS PHENOMENON BEFORE.
WHAT IS HAPPENING ...!?
These enormous plant-like organisms are coming into contact with nearby man-made structures
And instantly turning them into dust!
WHAT?!

THAT THIS "TREE"...
COULD IT BE...
IS DEVOURING CIVILIZATION ...!?

HEY!
IS THAT PART OF THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN" AS WELL!?

THAT "FRUIT" FLEW OVER HERE A MOMENT AGO..
DID IT USE THAT TO POWER UP OR SOMETHING!?

NO...
THAT'S PART OF THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS."

BUT THAT...
PART OF THE "TREE OF BEGIN-NINGS"
ゴゴゴゴゴ
AND THAT'S JUST A TINY PART OF IT.
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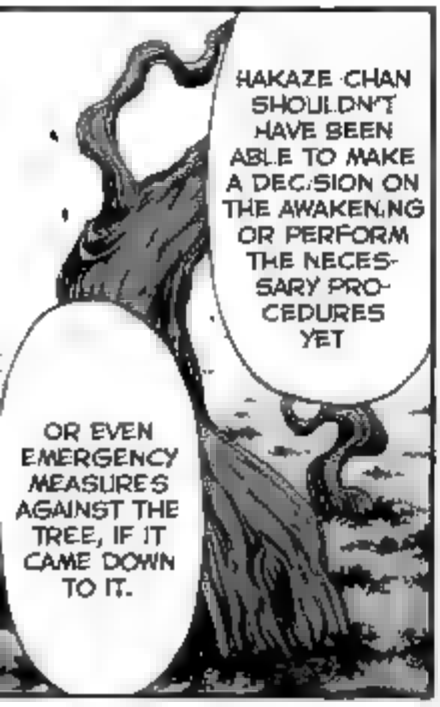
HAS THE "TREE OF BEGINN NGS" AWAKENED?
JUN CHIROU -DONO


HAKAZE CHAN SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO MAKE A DEC SION ON THE AWAKEN NG OR PERFORM THE NECES-SARY PRO-CEDURES YET
OR EVEN EMERGENCY MEASURES AGAINST THE TREE, IF IT CAME DOWN TO IT.

I DON'T THINK ANY-TH NG TOO EXTREME WILL HAPPEN, AS LONG AS IT DOESN'T COMPLETELY AWAKEN.

THEN THE WORLD WIL...

Or could it be...
That this is also something that must necessarily happen?

Samon's loss is confirmed.

To let Hakaze san return here quickly...
With things like this...

Despite that, he's just standing there silently...

Mahiro should use that talisman to threaten Samon
and make him reveal the location of the offer -ing hidden on the island.

WHAT KIND OF A MIRACLE IS THIS, FOR THINGS TO BE TURNED AROUND SO EASILY?
IT'S LIKE I'VE BEEN TAKEN FOR A FOOL...

I DON'T LIKE THIS...
THIS IS TOO CONVENIENT FOR HAKAZE.

THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN" MAY BE THE REAL CULPRIT
BUT THERE'S NO REAL PROOF OF THAT, EITHER.

ニヤニヤ

EVEN IF YOU CALL IT MAGIC, IT'S BORROWING POWER FROM THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS"

IF THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" WANTED TO, IT COULD FAKE INVESTIGATION RESULTS AS MUCH AS IT WANTED TO, RIGHT?

ONE COULD ALSO THEORIZE THAT THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" SHOWED THE EXISTENCE OF THAT PERSON
SO THAT, NO MATTER WHAT, I WOULD STAND ON HAKAZE'S SIDE.

Sigh
EVEN IF THE CRIMINAL'S SOME ORDINARY PERSON, IF THE CULPRIT CAN'T BE FOUND BY THE MAGICAL INVESTIGATION...
THEN WE WOULD BE LED TO BELIEVE IN THE EXISTENCE OF THIS "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN."

Then there's no longer any basis for the existence of the "Magician of Zetsuen."
If there are any doubts about that magical investigation...
That nobody turned up in the magical investigation.
The existence of the "Magician of Zetsuen" rests on just one point...

THINKS WE SHOULD BRING HAKAZE BACK, HUH?
BUT HE STILL...
IT SEEMS LIKE YOSHINO IS THINKING THE SAME THING.

EVEN IF I HELP SAMON, I WON'T BE ABLE TO FIND THE ONE THAT KILLED AIKA.
NOT JUST THAT, BUT THAT BASTARD SAMON MIGHT BE THE VERY REASON THAT AIKA WAS KILLED.
BUT IF I LEND HAKAZE A HAND, WILL THE CRIMINAL TURN UP?
THE "CULPRIT" MIGHT VERY WELL BY THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" ITSELF, NO?
I don't have anymore cards to play.
However...
If that boy keeps on holding the talisman without moving...
There's still hope.

Samon...
If the "Tree of Zetsuen" is able to resurrect in time, before the princess returns, then it's still our win!

Where did you hide the "offering"?

I will find it on my own!

I went through the trouble of burying it deep in the forest.
Princess, you won't find the offering that easily.

You'll need at least two hours...no, at least one hour.
It will be difficult to find it just with the information you have now...

If nothing happens during that time...
There's still hope for the "Tree of Zetsuen" to awake in time!

But I must return.
Samon... Don't think that I value my own life that much.

If I don't return, there's nothing I can do!
I won't be able to atone for anything!
...Even though ...
I don't want to believe that...
The "Tree of Beginnings" brought about Mahiro's sister's death...
To begin with...
Even if it's the "Tree of Beginnings".
Can it really manipulate the laws of this world so precisely?
In the end, because of a series of coincidences...
We've ended up in this situation... shouldn't we think of it that way?

To beg'n with, if the "Tree of Beginnings" was able to bring about m racles at its conven'ence ike that
Then why haven't I found the offering yet?
Despite how much 've wanted to
And hoped to find it...
What?

ドキン・・・

That...
It couldn't be...
ズズズウウーン・・・

It couldn't be... that kind of thing...?!

ニュウウウウウ
THIS IS...
THIS...

Why...
Why did something like that drop here?
Was the fighter improperly equipped?
Did it fall during launch? A misfire?
A product of civilization like this... a powerful military weapon...
Why did it appear before me so conveniently...!
A fighter craft's air-to-air missile...?

So the "Tree of Beginnings" delivered a completely different "offering" to me?
Samon's hidden offering can't easily be found...
If something like this is possible...
Wouldn't killing a little sister at its convenience be child's play?
...THIS IS AN "OFFERING" CAPABLE OF CROSSING TIME.
THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" IS MANIPULATING NATURAL LAW TO SUCH AN EXTENT
I'M COMING BACK.
I'VE OBTAINED AN "OFFERING."
Hakaze-san.
What happened?

I'LL CONFIRM THE LOCATION WITH BOTH THE DOLL AND THE SKELETON!
YOSHINO, HANG THAT DOLL ON MY SKELETON.
EH?!
AH, YES!
GOT IT!
Don't fuck with me! As if I'd die here!
I'll definitely find the one that killed Mahiro's sister!

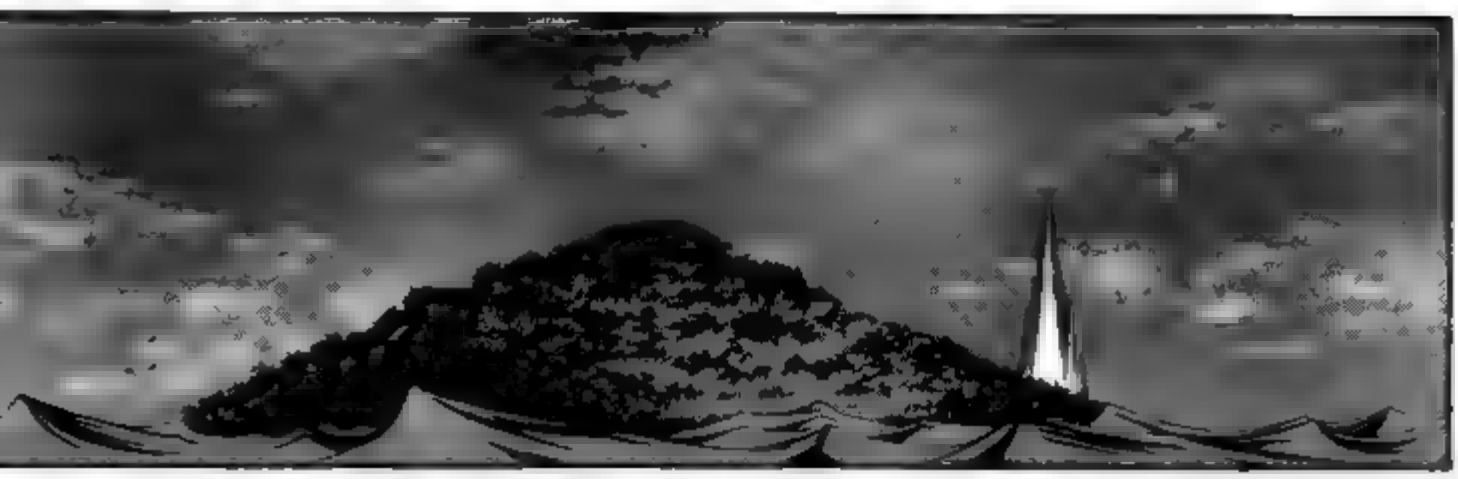
Even if this...
Isn't what the "Tree of Beginnings" wants!

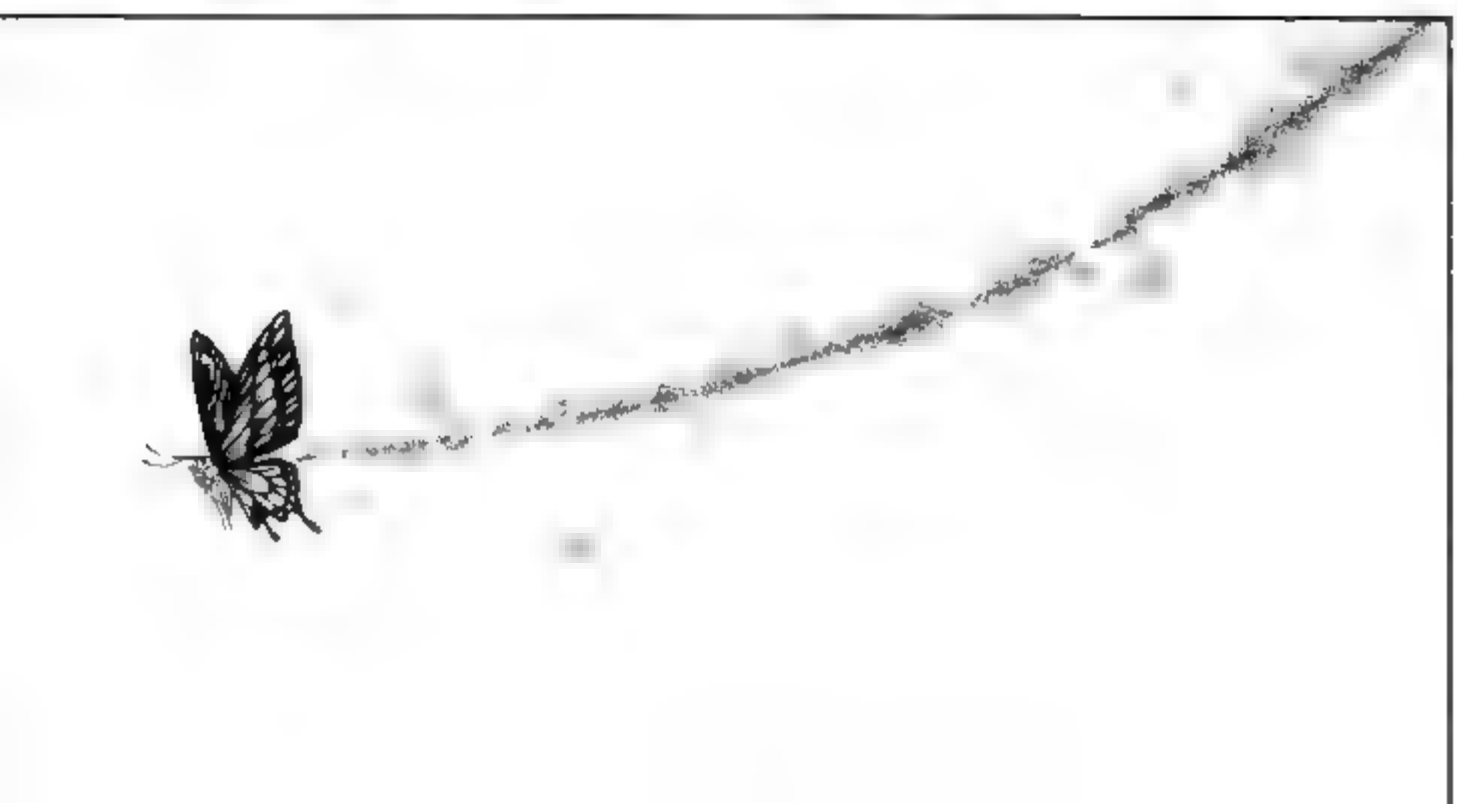
I'll find the truth with my own hands!
I won't betray those who have fought on my behalf!

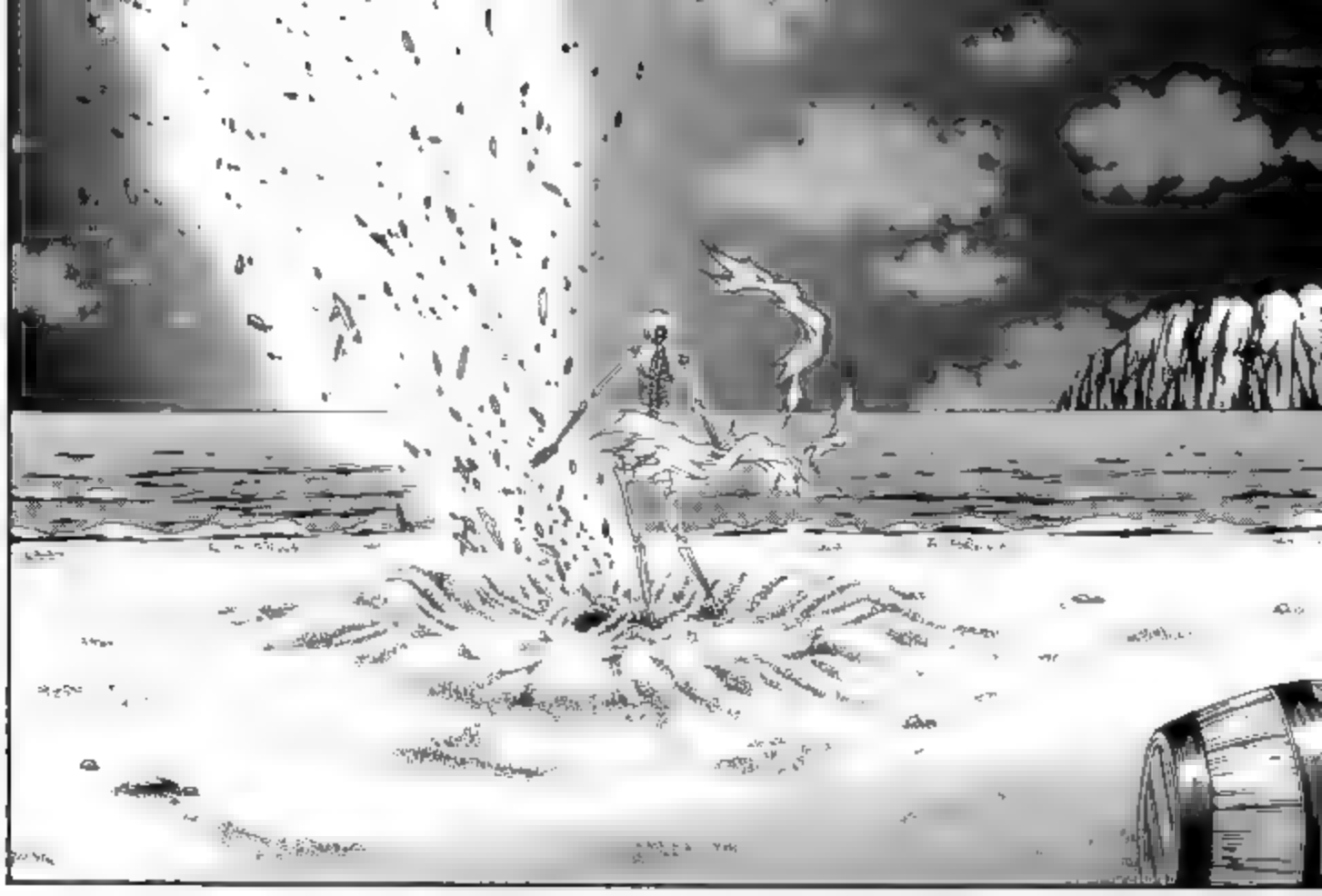
I will return!
I will move forward from here!

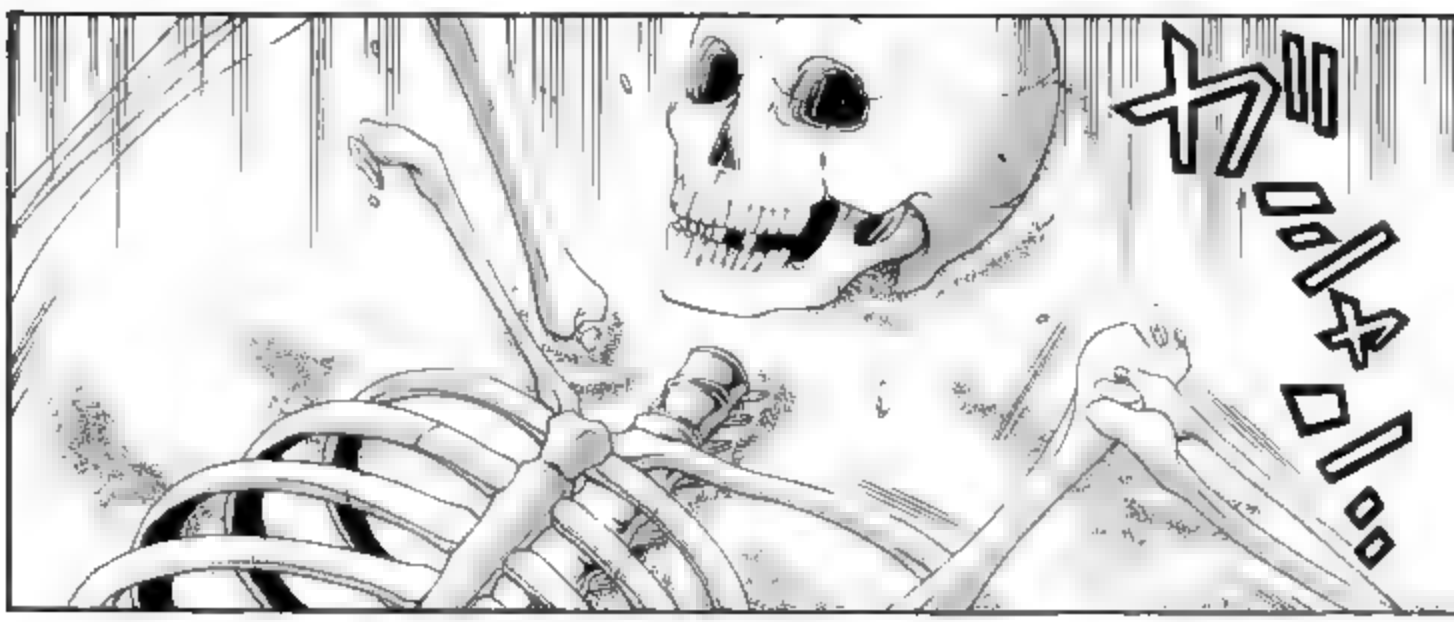
MY NAME IS KUSARIBE HAKAZE!
THE TREE OF BEGINNINGS, FROM THE BEGINNING OF TIME!
TREE WITHIN THE TREE, GREAT OAK WITHIN THE OAK

FOR THE SAKE OF CROSSING THE CHASM OF TIME...
HEAR THIS NOBLE NAME AND GRANT MY DESIRE!





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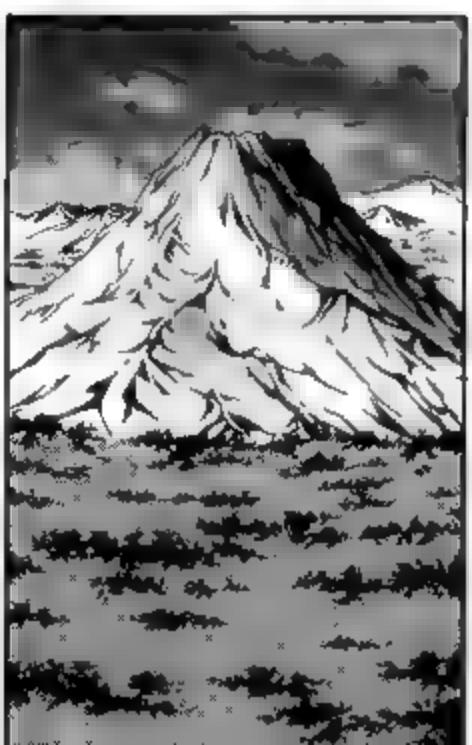

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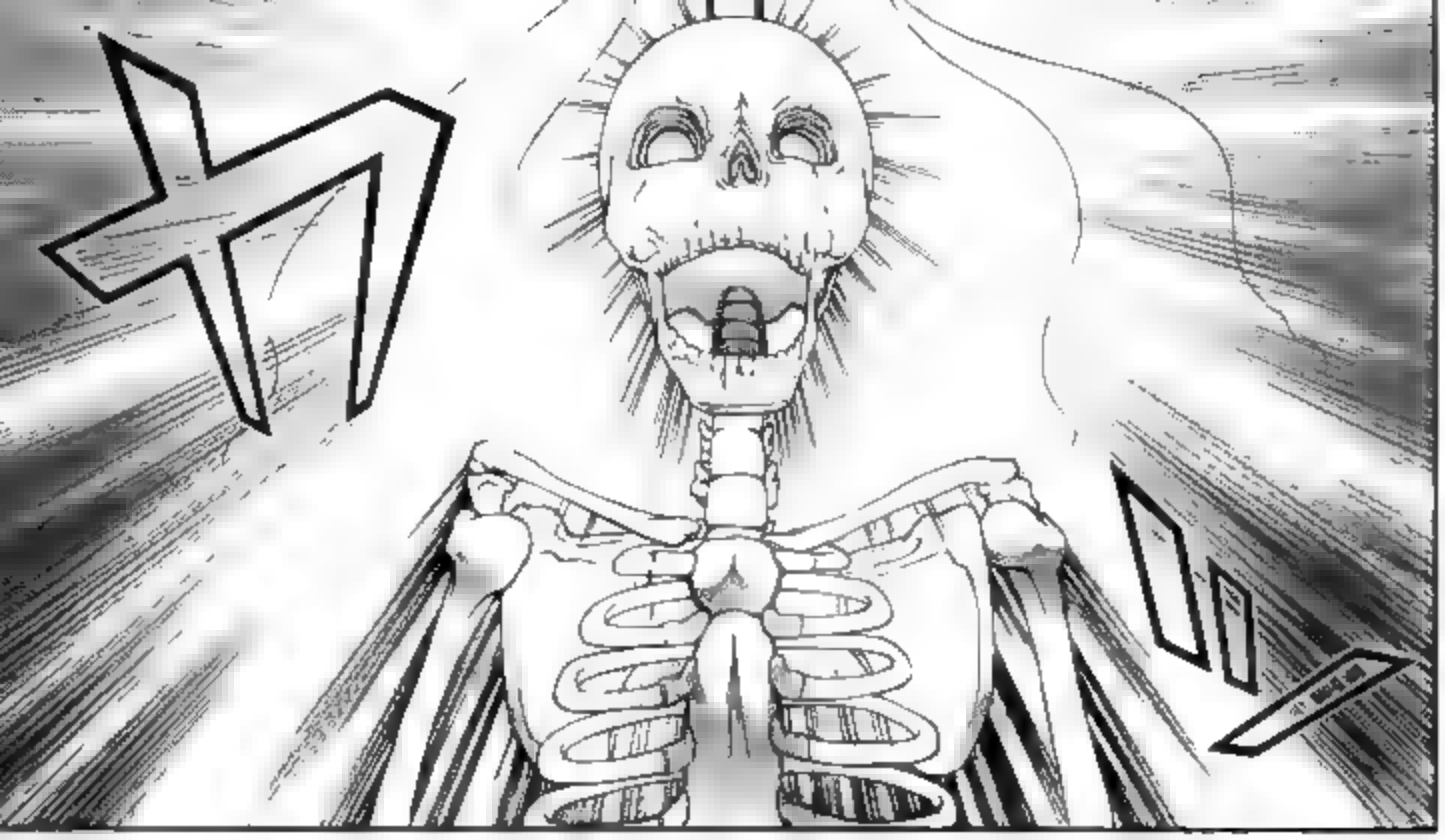
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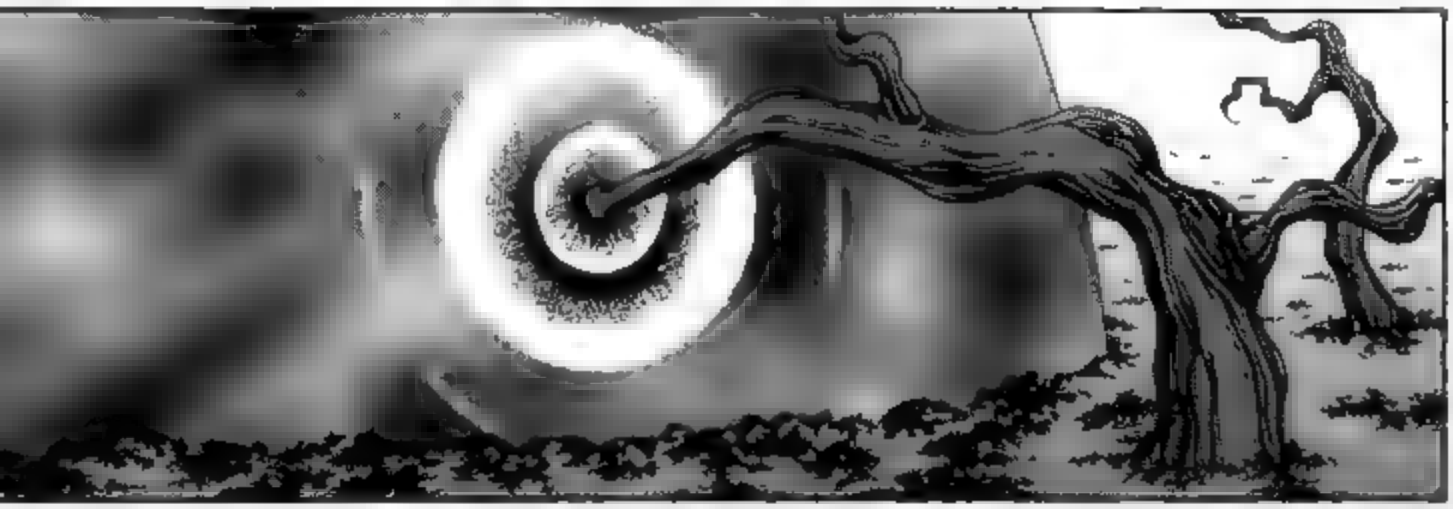
THE CAGE OF TIME...
HAS BEEN BROKEN!

カッ
カラン
フォォォ オオッ
IT WAS WINTER HERE, HUH.
THAT'S RIGHT..
IT IS INDEED COLD HERE..

I am Kusaribe Hakaze, the "Princess of Beginnings".

I've crossed through two years to return here.

IS THAT ..
TRYING TO BREAK THE BARR ER?



THAT BARRIER WAS MADE BY BORROWING THE POWER OF THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS", WASN'T IT?

AND YOU'RE ASKING WHETHER OR NOT THE "TREE OF BEGINN NGS" IS ABLE TO BREAK IT?

THE MILITARY'S ATTACK BARELY MADE A DENT,
AND IT'S GOING TO BREAK THE BARRIER LIKE THAT?

IT WILL VANISH IN AN INSTANT.

JUNICHIROU -DONO...
WASN'T THE BARRIER SUPPRESSING THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN" AS WELL?

ゴゴ...
ゴゴ...

IF IT'S SUDDENLY FORCED TO DISAPPEAR LIKE THAT...
JUST... JUST WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN?

I DON'T KNOW.
HOWEVER...
I DO KNOW THIS.
A TEMPEST IS COMING.

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ZETSUEN NO TEMPEST

by SHIRODAIRA Kyou and SAIZAKI Ren

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Zetsuen no Tempest ch 15

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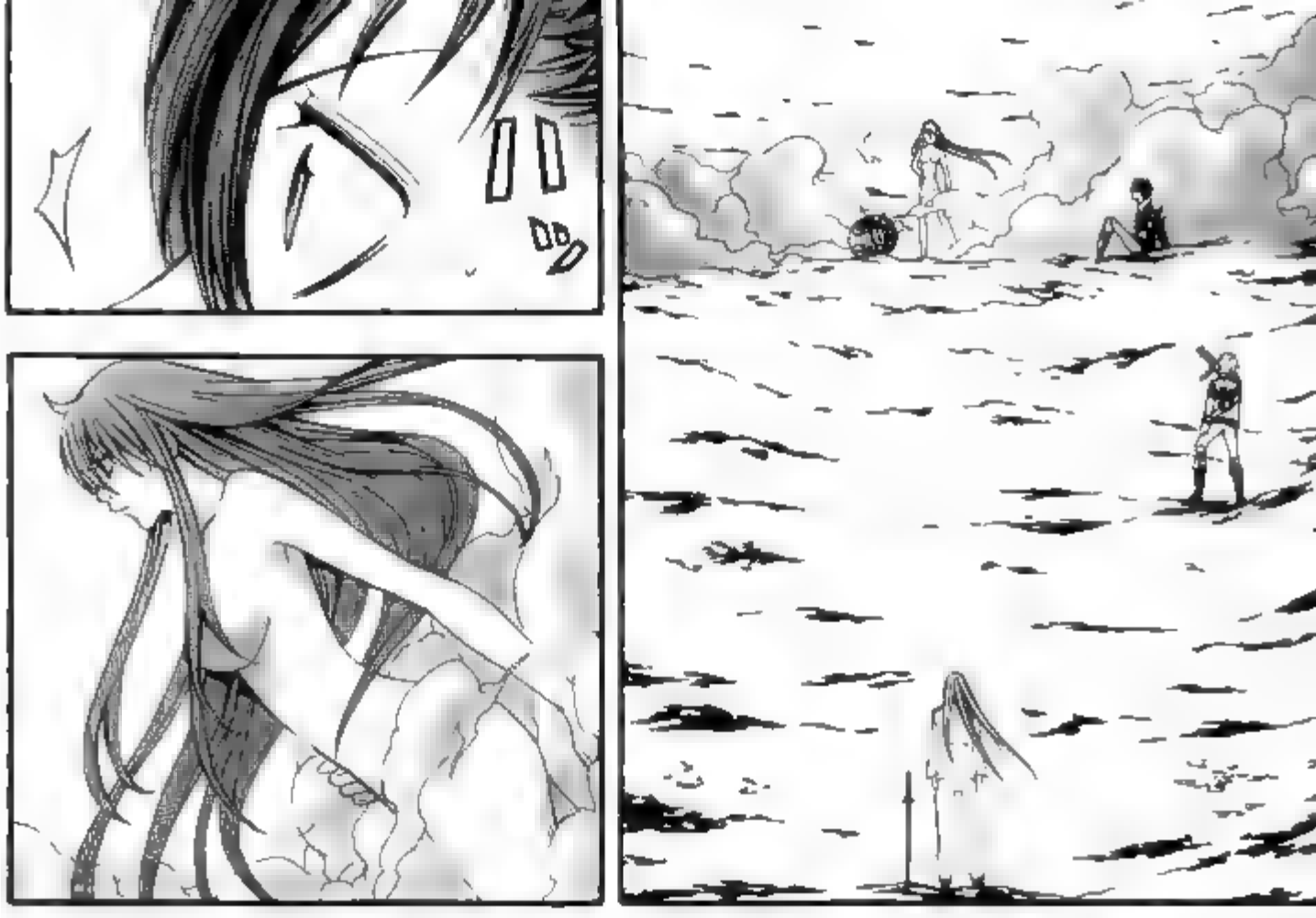
“To be, or not to be”

Chapter 16: "Absent Thee from Felicity Awhile..."

THE CIVILIZATION BLASTER

I am Kusaribe Hakaze, the "Princess of Beginnings."
I've crossed two years of time to return here.



HAKAZE-SAN..
WHY ARE YOU NAKED?!

IT'S NOT AS IF I HAD TIME TO RE-CONSTRUCT CLOTHING.

SO THAT'S MAHIRO, HUH...
YOU HAVE A GOOD LOOK ABOUT YOU.
ON THE OTHER HAND...
Yoshino.
YOU LOOK QUITE YOUNG, BUT...
YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE THE KIND OF BAD GUY WHO ACTS WITHOUT THINKING FIRST.

AWW, NO, NO...
EVEN THOUGH I SAID YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE A BAD GUY...
YOU ALREADY SAID I WASN'T...
ISN'T THIS A REAL GUN?
SO MAYBE YOU ARE A BAD GUY AFTER ALL?

Samon, no further explanation is needed, right?
Obey me.
HOWEVER, AT THIS POINT,
I DON'T KNOW WHETHER OR NOT YOU'RE IN THE WRONG.
WE NEED TO DISCUSS THINGS.
WHAT WE SHOULD DO, WHAT WE SHOULD BECOME...

We must not be hasty.
In handling this situation.

MAHIRO.

!

I GUARANTEE THE CULPRIT WILL LIE PROSTRATE BEFORE YOU.
EVEN IF THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" IS ACTING BEHIND THE SCENES

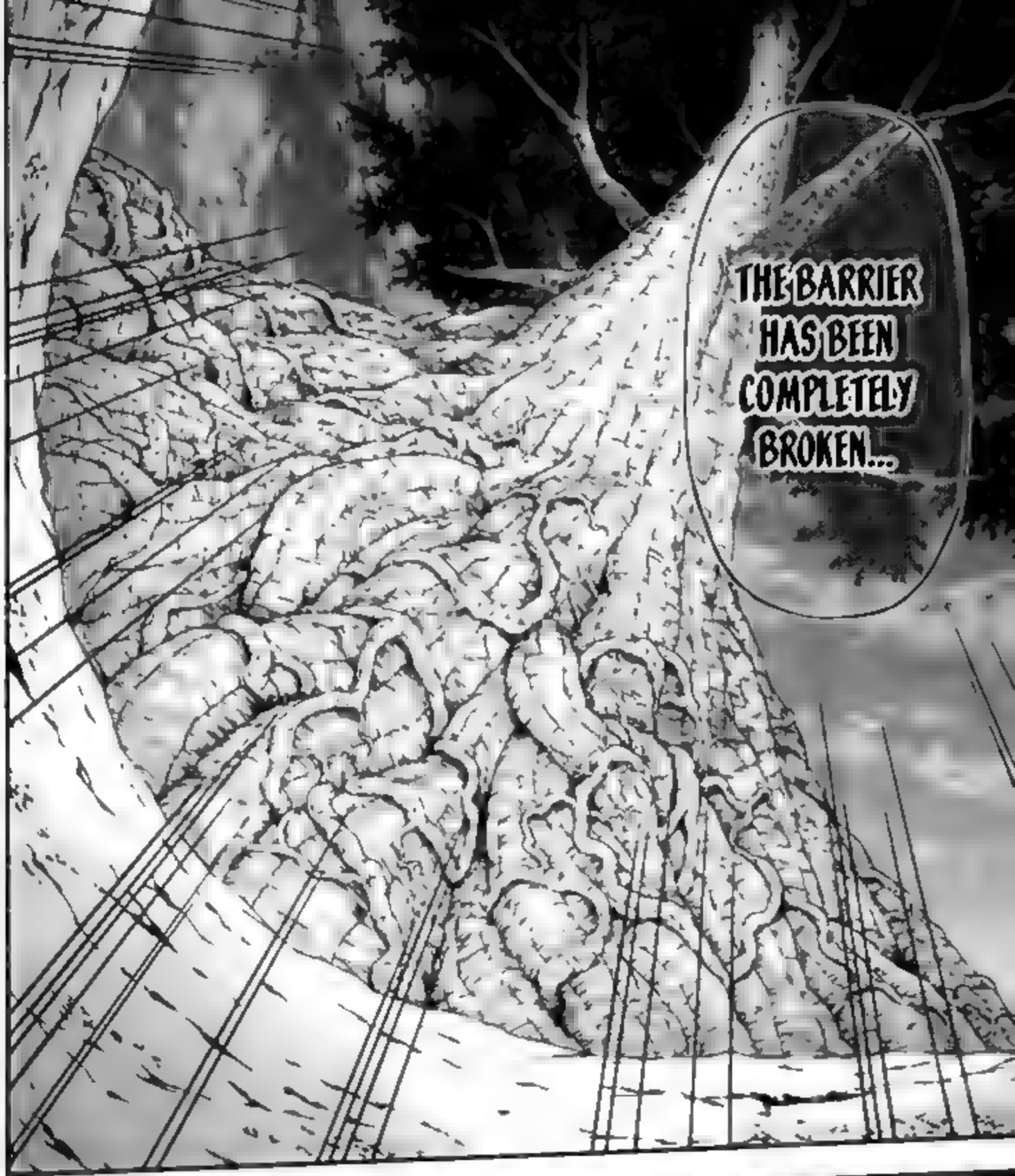
SO PLEASE BE PATIENT.

THOUGH THINGS HAVE ENDED UP LIKE THIS, I WILL KEEP MY PROMISE.
I WILL DEFINITELY FIND THE ONE WHO KILLED YOUR SISTER.

CAN YOU...
REALLY FIND THE CULPRIT?
AND IF THE CULPRIT CANNOT BE FOUND,
THEN IT CAN ONLY BE THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" ITSELF.
I'M THE ONE FAVORED BY THE LAWS OF THIS WORLD, EVEN ABLE TO PASS THROUGH TIME.
EVEN IF THE CULPRIT IS THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN," THE CULPRIT WILL DEFINITELY BE FOUND.
IF I SEEK IT,

In which case, you can kill me.
As I would be the one responsible for her murder.
Hm...
WELL, THEN, YOSHINO.
YOUR PROMISE, AS WELL...
UNDER-STOOD.

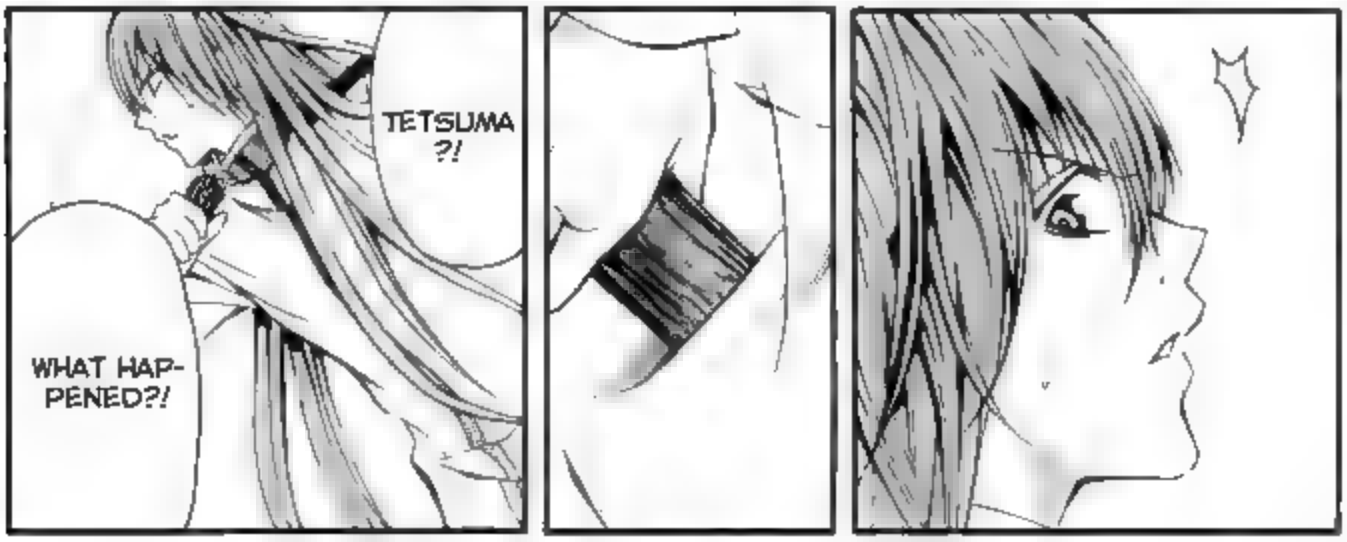
!?
!
SAMON!!

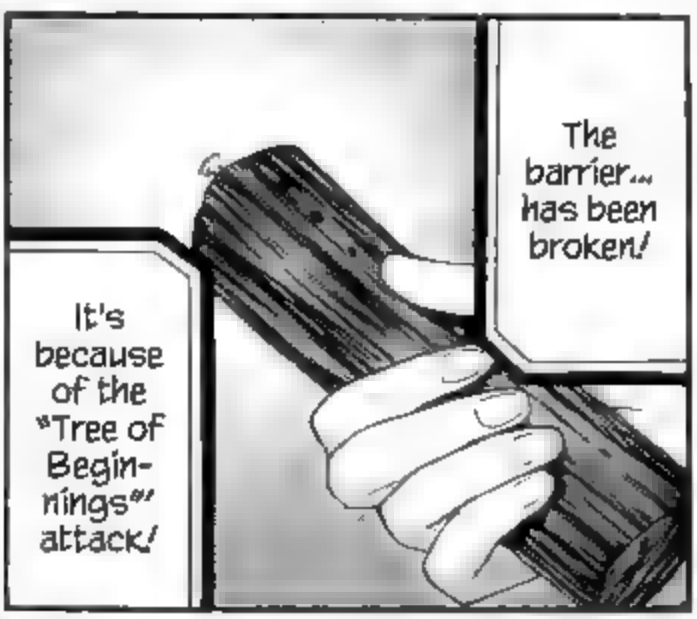

THE BARRIER HAS BEEN COMPLETELY BROKEN...

NO...
THE BARRIER HAS VANISHED COMPLETELY.

NO MATTER HOW FIERCE THE MILITARY'S ATTACK WAS,
IN JUST AN INSTANT...!

IF THE BARRIER WERE TO VANISH AT THIS STAGE IN THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN"'S GROWTH,
ゥウウウウウウーリリ。。
THEN THE CONTROL MECHANISMS WILL DISAPPEAR TOO, RIGHT?!


TETSUMA ?!
WHAT HAP-PENED?!

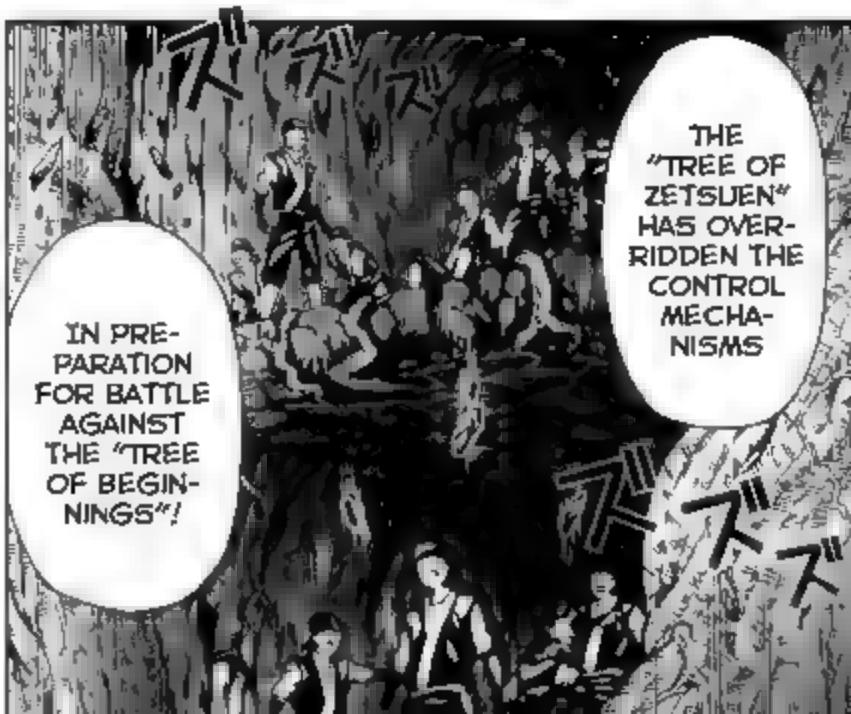

The barrier... has been broken!
It's because of the "Tree of Begin-nings"' attack!

IT CAN'T BE...
HAS THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" AWAKENED?

The "Tree of Begin-nings"
has awakened ...?!

SAMON-DONO!
PLEASE GIVE YOUR ORDERS!

What will happen at this rate...?!


ズズズ
THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN" HAS OVER-RIDDEN THE CONTROL MECHA-NISMS
IN PRE-PARATION FOR BATTLE AGAINST THE "TREE OF BEGIN-NINGS"!
ズズズ

WAHHH!!

THIS... IS TOO UNREAL...
.....
ギギギ
ギギギ...

ドオン

ゴゴゴゴゴゴゴゴゴゴゴゴ
.....
THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN" HAS OVER-RIDDEN ITS CONTROL MECHA-NISMS...
IT'S GOING RAMPANT...!
AT THIS RATE, MT. FUJI... NO...
THE ENTIRE ARCHIPE-LAGO WILL BE DES-TROYED!

YEAH... THAT MIGHT VERY WELL HAPPEN.
BUT...
THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" WON'T LET IT END LIKE THIS.
!!

WHA...
WHAT IS THAT!
IT'S DEVOURING THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN"...?!

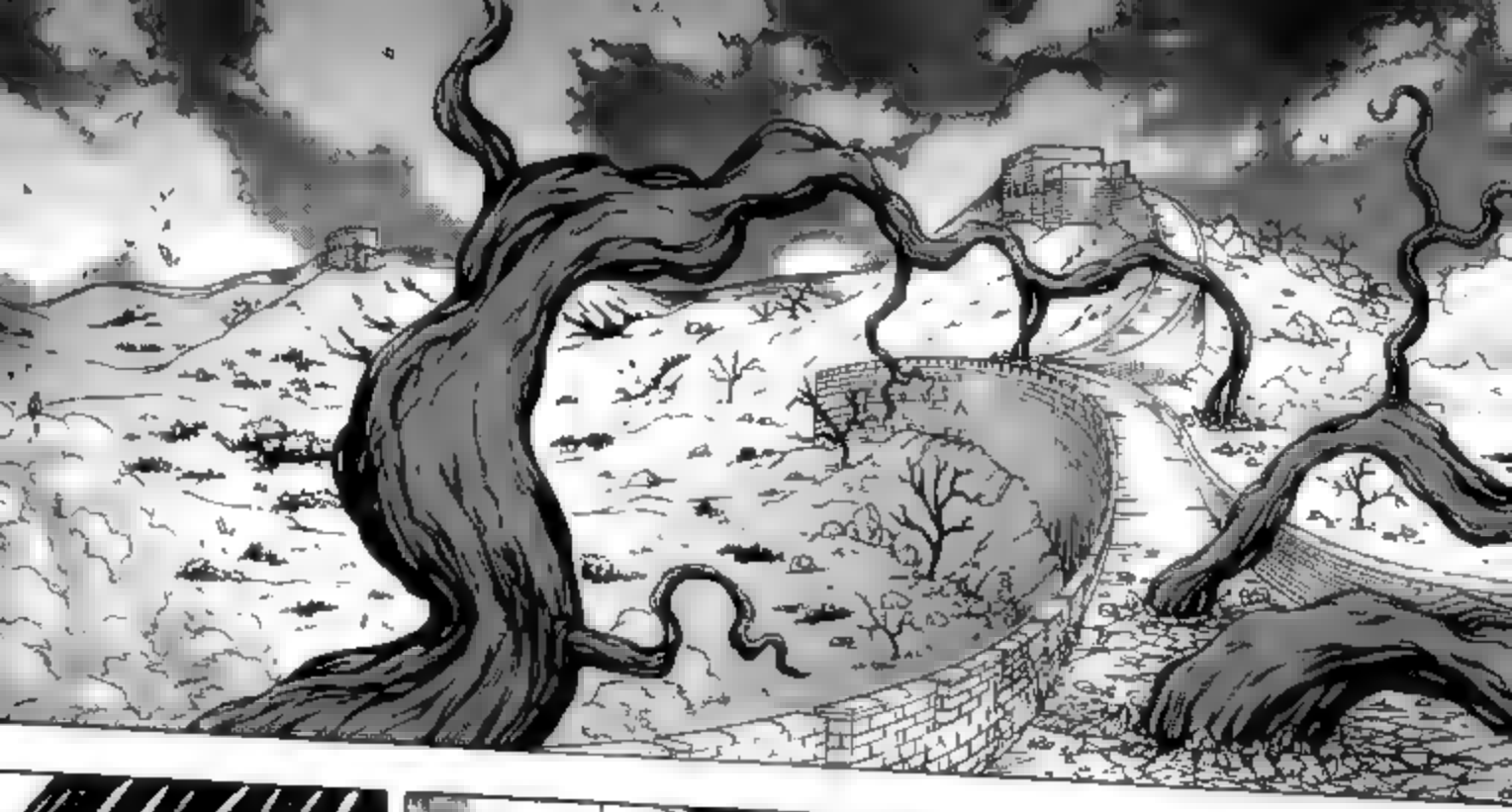
ALL OF THOSE THINGS... IS THAT THE "TREE OF BEGIN-NINGS"?
THAT'S JUST A PART OF IT?

IF YOU SAY THAT'S A PART OF GOD...
THEN THE WORLD IN WHICH GOD APPEARS...
WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE VERY HOS-PITABLE TO HUMAN EXISTENCE.

NATSU MURA-KUN!
DEFENSE!!
!?

JUNICHIROU-DONO, I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S BECAUSE THE PRINCESS HASN'T INITIATED THE COMPLETE AWAKENING, BUT
THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN" HAS THE ADVANTAGE, RIGHT?
IT SEEMS SO.
HOWEVER...

I BELIEVE THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" HAS ALREADY STARTED AWAKENING THROUGHOUT THE WORLD



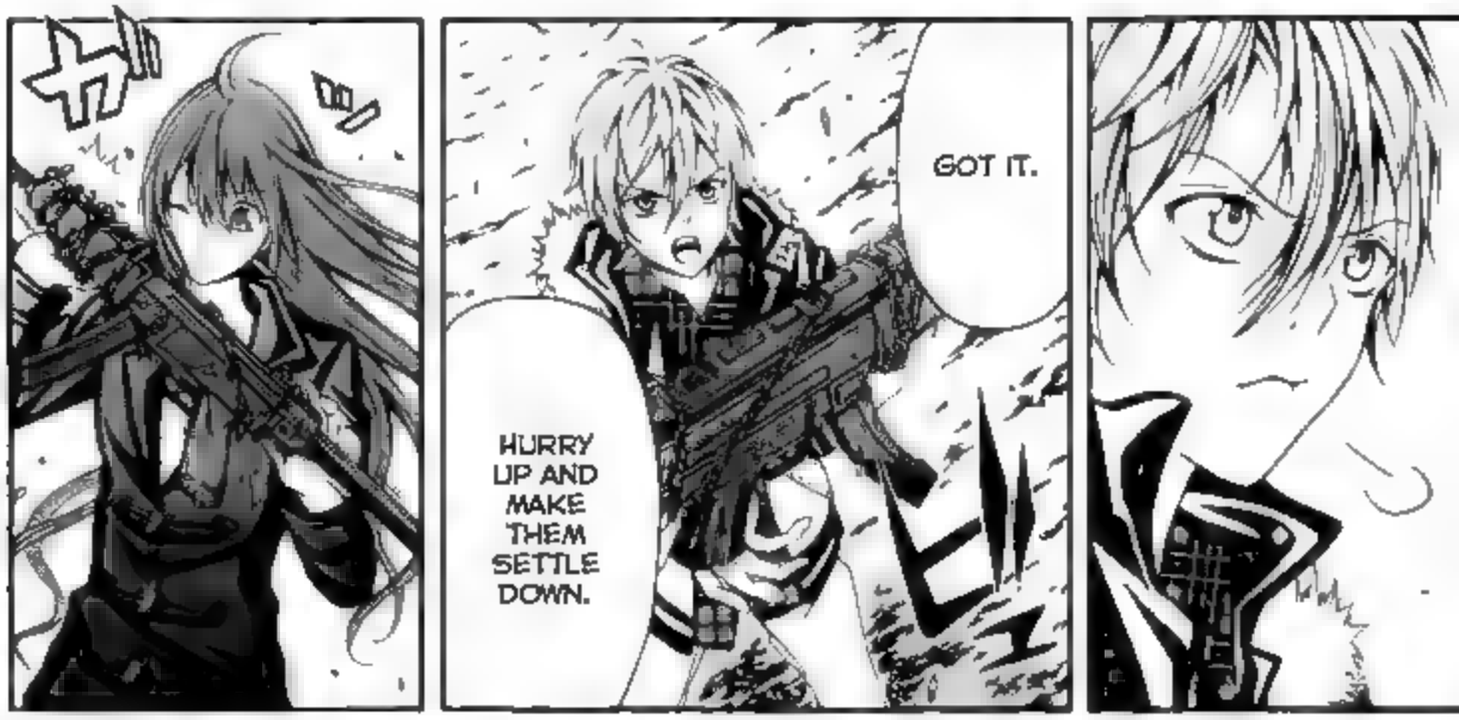
IT'S HAPPENING AROUND THE GLOBE...!?
THAT CIVILIZATION-DEVOURING TREE ISN'T A PHENOMENON LIMITED TO OUR COUNTRY!?

THE WORLD'S GOING CRAZY!

ガロ
HEAR MY NAME AND OBEY!
SAMON!
WHERE IS THE RESUR-RECTION CEREMONY BEING HELD?!

THERE MUST BE A LARGE QUANTITY OF SACR.-FICES WHERE THE CEREMONY IS HAP-PENING, RIGHT?
I'LL USE THOSE TO SUPPRESS THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN"!
AND SIMU..TA-NEOUSLY HA..T THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS"' AWAKE-NING!
THAT...
BELIEVE IN ME!
I DEFINITELY WON'T LET THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" COMPLETELY AWAKEN LIKE THIS!
FOLLOW THIS ROAD TOWARDS THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN".
AT THE FIRST CROSSROAD, HEAD LEFT, AND OPEN THE THIRD DOOR ON THE R GHT! IT'S THERE!
MEMBERS OF THE CLAN HAVE A..READY STARTED TO EVACUATE!

SUCH THAT EVEN A DIRECT ATTACK FROM THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN" CAN'T BREAK IT
WHILE I'M OFF SUPPRES-SING THE GREAT TREES, STAY HERE AND DON'T MOVE!
GIVE ME THAT TALISMAN!
I'LL USE IT AS A SACRI-FICE TO ENHANCE THE BAR-RIER!
Mahiro


GOT IT.
HURRY UP AND MAKE THEM SETTLE DOWN.

Yoshino.
I'LL DEFINITELY THANK YOU LATER...

The "Tree of Zetsuen" ?!
No...?!
The "Tree of Beginnings"...

YOSHINO!

!
YOSHINO!
YOSHINO!
Is it fatal?!
Is it a fatal injury?!

I won't let you die!
Don't die!
It's ok...
It's ok... it can be healed!

HURRY UP AND HEAL YOSHINO!!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, HAKAZE!

DON'T MOVE!
IT'S NOT SAFE YET...
BOY!

ゴッ
ドン

MAHIRO!!

This... how could this...
The moment the princess returned...

HAVE THEY BEEN JUDGED TO BE OF NO FURTHER USE AND ELIMINATED...?!

A COINCIDENCE?!
OR THE NATURAL LAW OF THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS"?!

SAMON! DON'T JUST SPACE OUT!
HURRY AND SAVE MAHIRO!

I DEFI-NITELY WON'T FORGIVE YOU!
LISTEN! YOU DEFI-NITELY HAVE TO SAVE HIM!
IF SOME-THING HAPPENS TO HIM, I WON'T FORGIVE YOU!

It can't be healed that quickly.
Yoshino's wound is too deep...

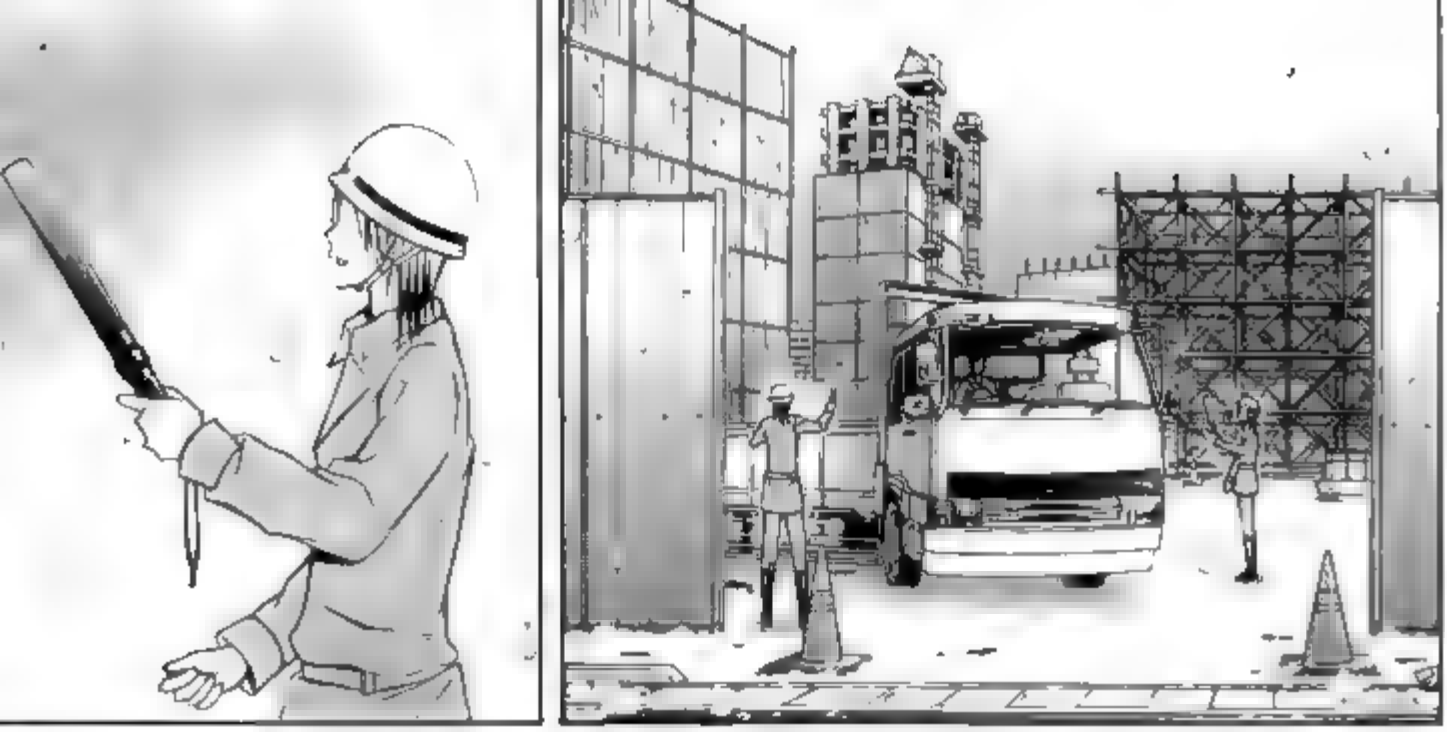
I'll have to heal Yoshino's body as I make my way to where the ceremony is taking place...
But... if this tempest isn't stopped, the danger won't go away.

SAMON! I'M LEAVING MAHIRO TO YOU!
I'LL GO GET THINGS UNDER CONTROL QUICKLY!
I don't under-stand...
Just what does the "Tree of Beginnings" want me to do?
ガラ
ガラ
ガラ

HUH?
WHERE'D THAT GUY GO?
I THINK WE'D BETTER LEAVE FOR NOW.
IS THAT ALRIGHT?
IT'S HARD TO PIN HIM DOWN.
JUNICHIROU-DONO IS THAT KIND OF PERSON.
GIVEN THE CIRCUM-STANCES,
I THINK WE NEED TO HAVE A GOOD TALK, AS WELL.
AFTER ALL...
OH?

SPEAK FOR YOURSELF.
ゴゴゴゴゴゴゴゴ

One month later...



MY GIRL-FRIEND DUMPED ME.
SHE SAID SHE D.DN'T WANT AN UNRELIABLE GUY WITH NO PROSPECTS.

WHEW...

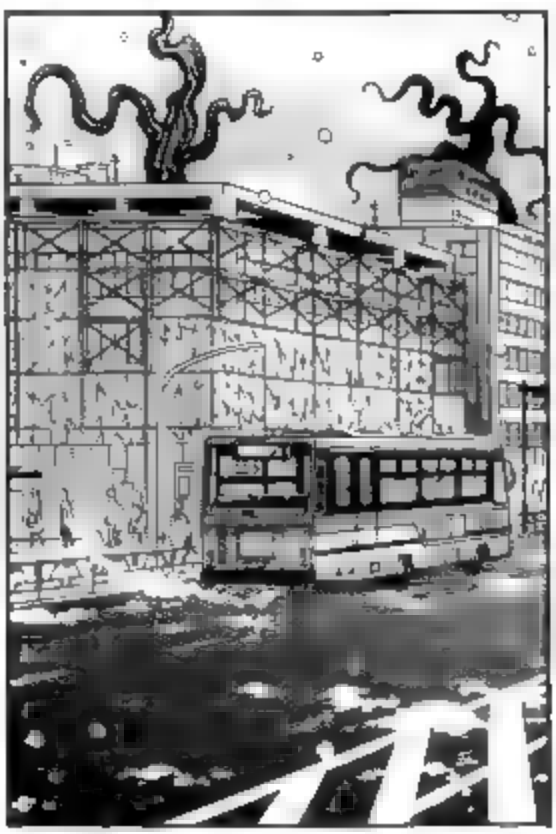
STILL SO LACK-LUSTER, HUH?
HANE-MURA-SAN.

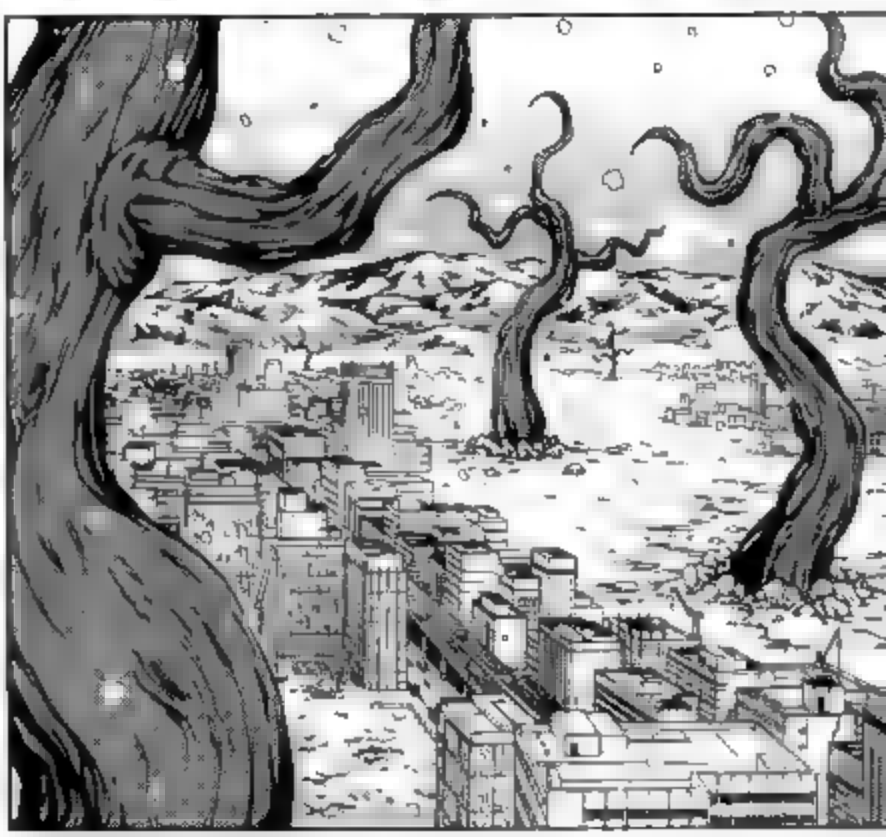
.....
AL-THOUGH THINGS HAVE SETTLED DOWN NOW...

I CAN UNDER-STAND HER UNEASE, AS WELL.
THIS WORLD IS QUITE STRANGE RIGHT NOW.

WAH...
Well, this guy's a weak-looking freelancer after all..

Those tree-like things have appeared throughout the world... they're so disturbing.





HAVE YOU HEARD THE RUMOR ABOUT THE "MAGICAN OF ZETSUEN"?

HANE-MURA-SAN...
AHH, THAT'S RIGHT.

I HEARD ABOUT IT FROM MY FRIENDS... IT'S THE ONE WHO CAN DESTROY THOSE TREES.
THE ONE WITH THE POWER TO RESTORE AND SAVE THE WORLD.
IT SOUNDS LIKE SOME BIG FAIRY TAIL...

ブゥゥゥン
Ah... well, about that.
It's probably referring to me.

!!?
Whew..
Save the world... Does that mean my future finally looks brighter...?

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ZETSUEN NO TEMPEST

by SHIRODAIRA Kyou and SAIZAKI Ren

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Zetsuen no Tempest ch 16

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"We are such stuff
As dreams are made on;
and our little life
Is rounded with
a sleep."

Chapter 17: Happy New Year

THE CIVILIZATION BLASTER

YOU HAVE NO SEX APPEAL AT ALL...

Well, if so..
How about I expose my navel...
Just what are you asking...
Of your middle-school little sister?
COME TO THINK OF IT, EVEN AT HOME, DON'T DO THAT.
STOP IT.
AND HOW IS A MIDDLE SCHOOLER SUPPOSED TO BE SEXY AND HAVE CLASS?
AND STOP WALKING AROUND WHILE YOU'RE CHEWING ON CORN LIKE THAT.
YOU HAVE NO CLASS AT ALL.

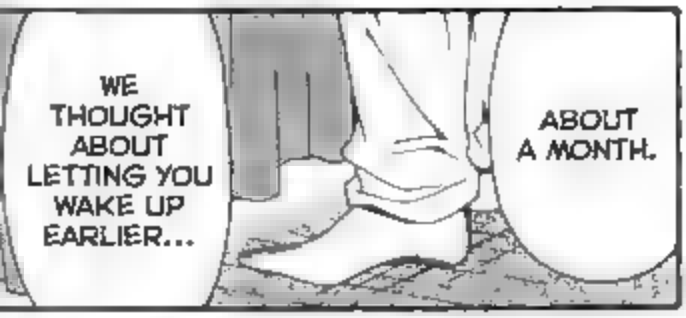
Want some corn?
It's sweet.
DON'T LOOK DOWN ON FARM PRODUCTS!
IT'S A FRUIT, YOU KNOW.
IT REALLY IS SWEET.

WHO?
WHERE DID YOU GET SUCH SWEET CORN?
SOMEONE GAVE IT TO ME.
Someone different from you, Mahiro.
Someone that doesn't request sexiness and class from me.

NOW THAT I THINK BACK, WAS IT AIKA'S BOYFRIEND THAT GAVE HER THAT CORN?!
DAMN IT!
IF ONLY I HAD LOOKED INTO IT BACK THEN...
1:00

DID YOU HAVE A BAD DREAM?
YOU REALLY AREN'T CUTE AT ALL.
SAMON, HUH. SINCE THE DAY I WAS BORN,
I HAVEN'T HAD ANY DREAMS.
.....

HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN ASLEEP?


ABOUT A MONTH.
WE THOUGHT ABOUT LETTING YOU WAKE UP EARLIER...

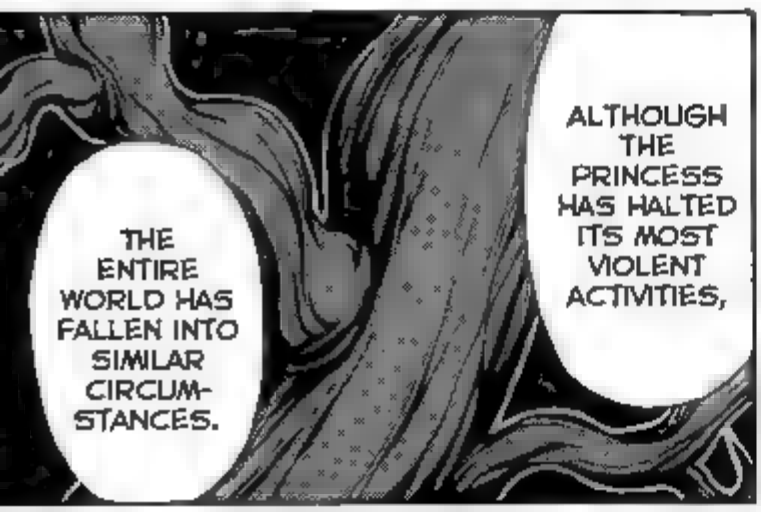
RELAX. YOUR INJURY HAS BEEN COMPLETELY HEALED.
YOUR OLD WOUNDS AND FRACTURES WERE HEALED AS WELL.

IT APPEARS THAT WHILE I WAS ASLEEP...
THE WORLD HASN'T BEEN DESTROYED YET?

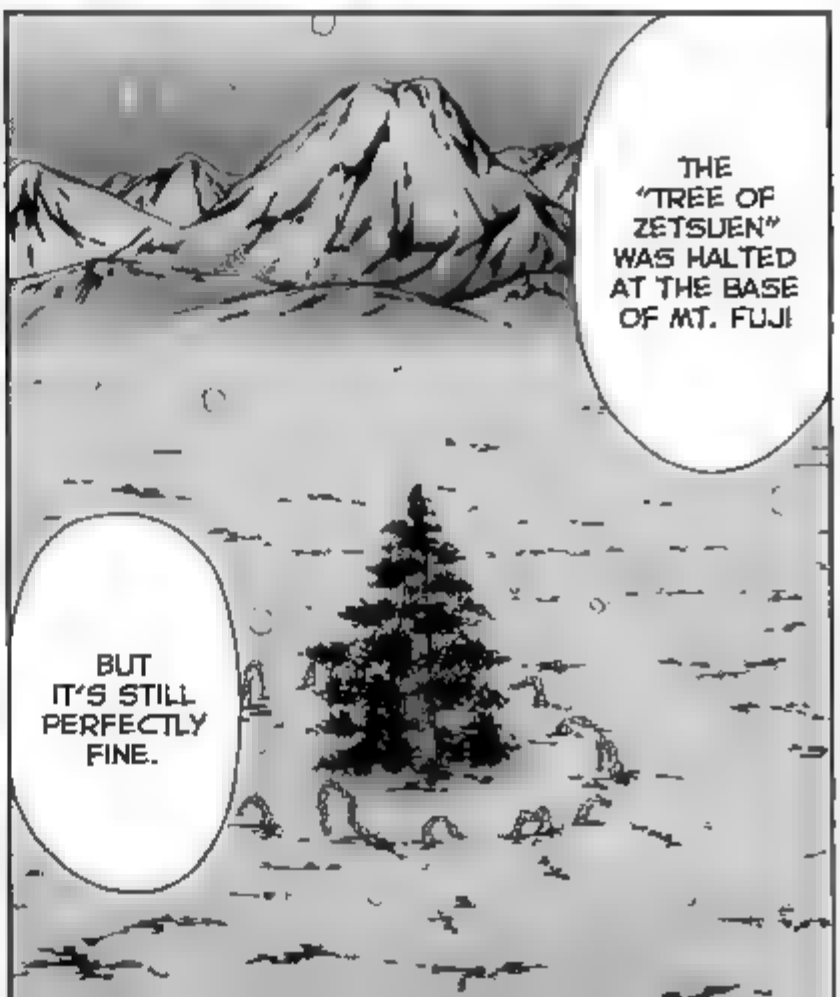
BUT DUE TO EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES, WE USED MAGIC TO KEEP YOU IN A STATE OF SLEEP.
DON'T THINK BADLY OF US.

AS FAR AS THAT GOES...
DECIDE WITH YOUR OWN EYES.

IS THAT
...
THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS"?


ALTHOUGH THE PRINCESS HAS HALTED ITS MOST VIOLENT ACTIVITIES,
THE ENTIRE WORLD HAS FALLEN INTO SIMILAR CIRCUM-STANCES.

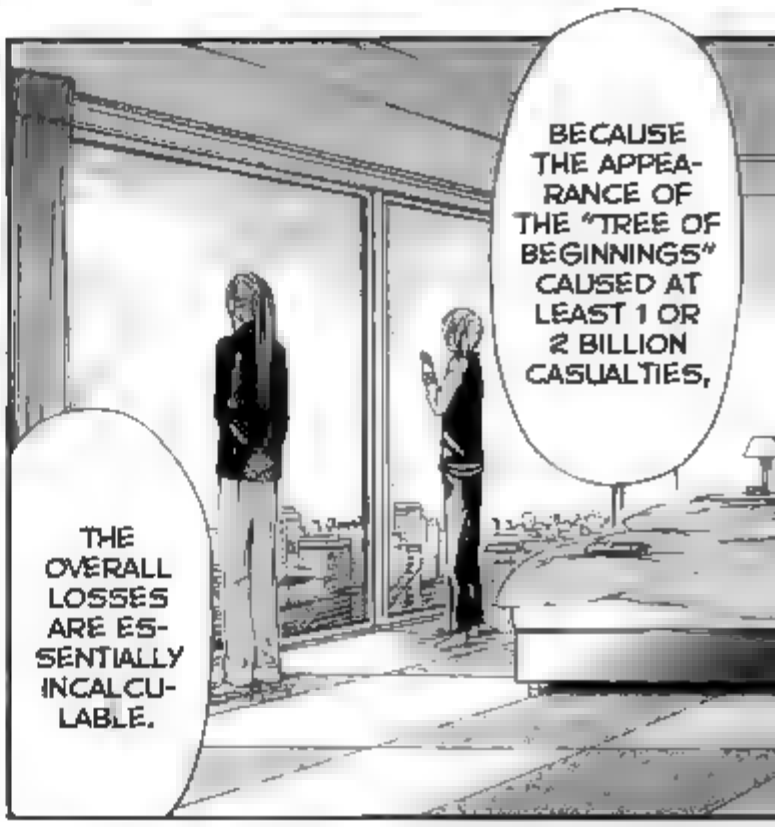
YEAH... IT'S PART OF IT.


THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN" WAS HALTED AT THE BASE OF MT. FUJI
BUT IT'S STILL PERFECTLY FINE.

SO WHY DOES EVERYTHING LOOK AS PEACEFUL AS ALWAYS?
THAT KIND OF THING IS CLEARLY RIGHT THERE...

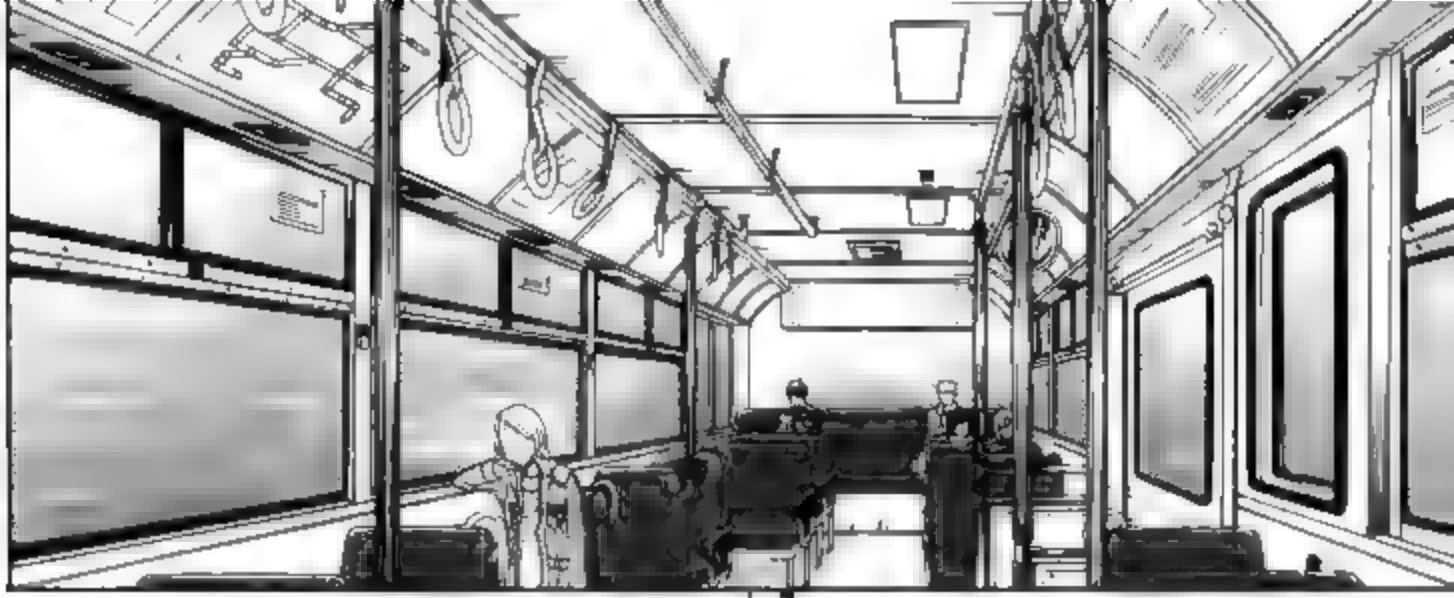
BUT NOW...

THE "TREE OF THE BEGINNINGS" HAS CAUSED DEATH AND DESTRUCTION THROUGHOUT THE GLOBE.


BECAUSE THE APPEARANCE OF THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" CAUSED AT LEAST 1 OR 2 BILLION CASUALTIES,
THE OVERALL LOSSES ARE ESSENTIALLY INCALCULABLE.

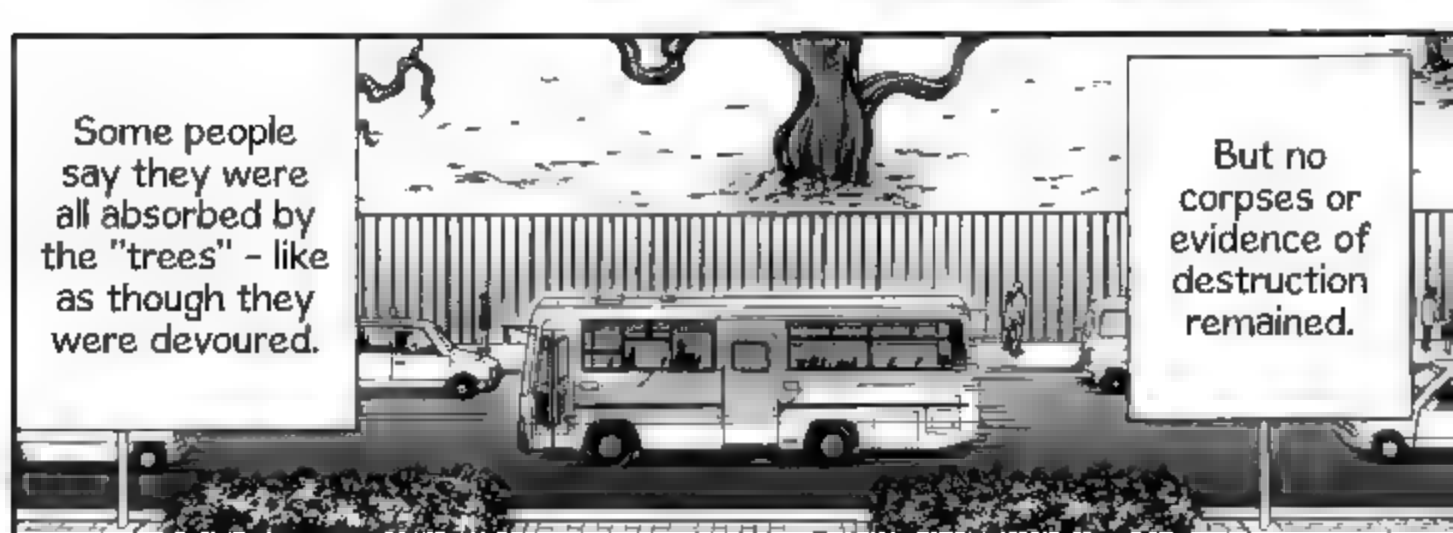
THE WORLD IS MORE PEACEFUL THAN EVER BEFORE.
HORRIFYINGLY PEACEFUL.

LET ME EXPLAIN WHAT EXACTLY OCCURRED.
YOU CAN CHANGE CLOTHES WHILE YOU LISTEN TO ME.
SO...
WHAT DATE IS IT TODAY?
HAPPY NEW YEAR.
TODAY IS JANUARY 1ST.

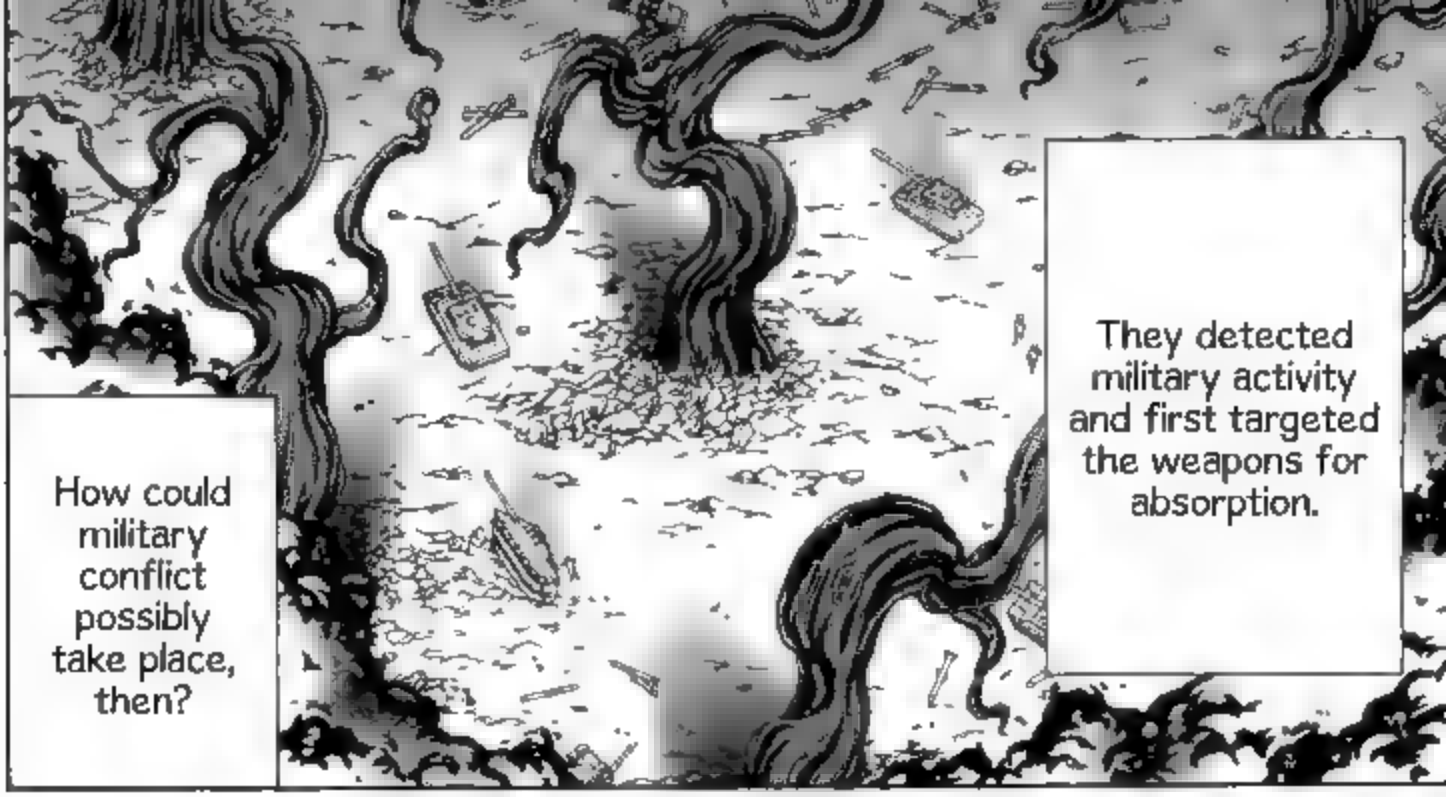


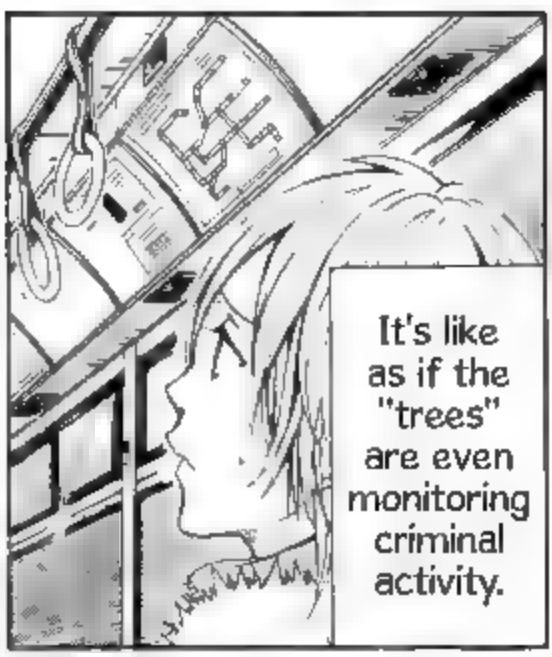
About a month ago...
Throughout the world, enormous "tree"-like things appeared.

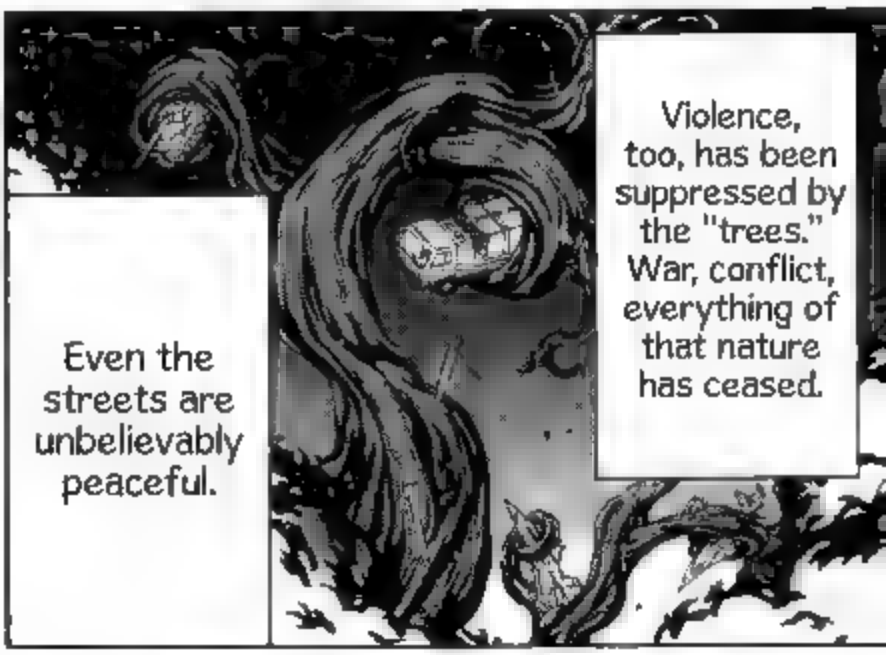
In a matter of hours, many things were destroyed, and many people were killed.
Due to these "trees," the world plunged into chaos.

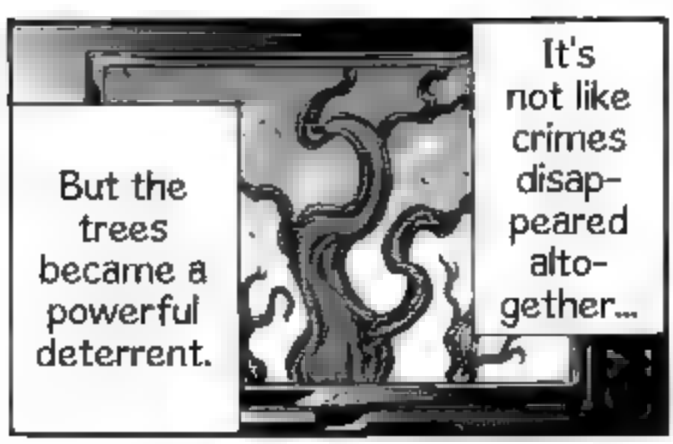

Some people say they were all absorbed by the "trees" - like as though they were devoured.
But no corpses or evidence of destruction remained.

In truth, everything should have dissolved into panic.
But that didn't happen, either.
STOP
No... rather, it couldn't happen.
Almost like...
The "trees" first targeted the weapons that the militaries had prepared, and absorbed them.

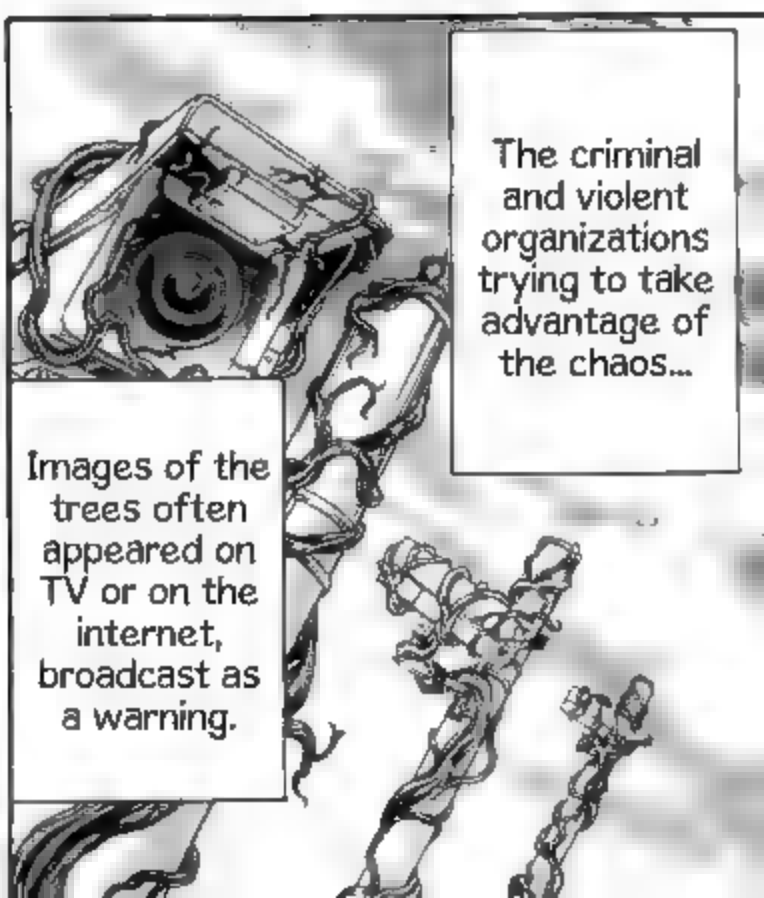

How could military conflict possibly take place, then?
They detected military activity and first targeted the weapons for absorption.


It's like as if the "trees" are even monitoring criminal activity.

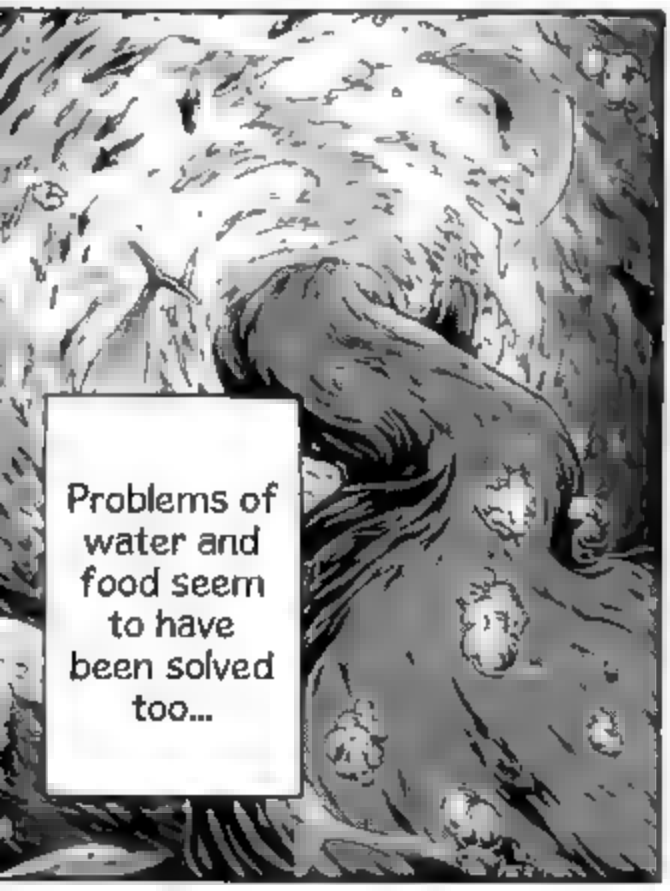

Even the streets are unbelievably peaceful.
Violence, too, has been suppressed by the "trees." War, conflict, everything of that nature has ceased.

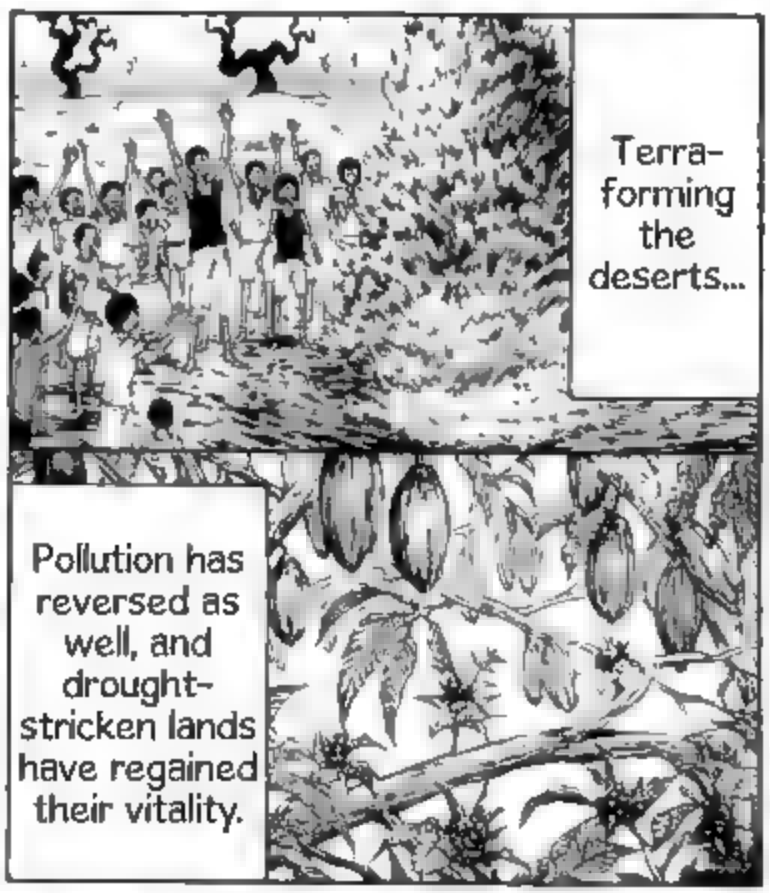

But the trees became a powerful deterrent.
It's not like crimes disappeared altogether...

Now the streets are extremely safe.

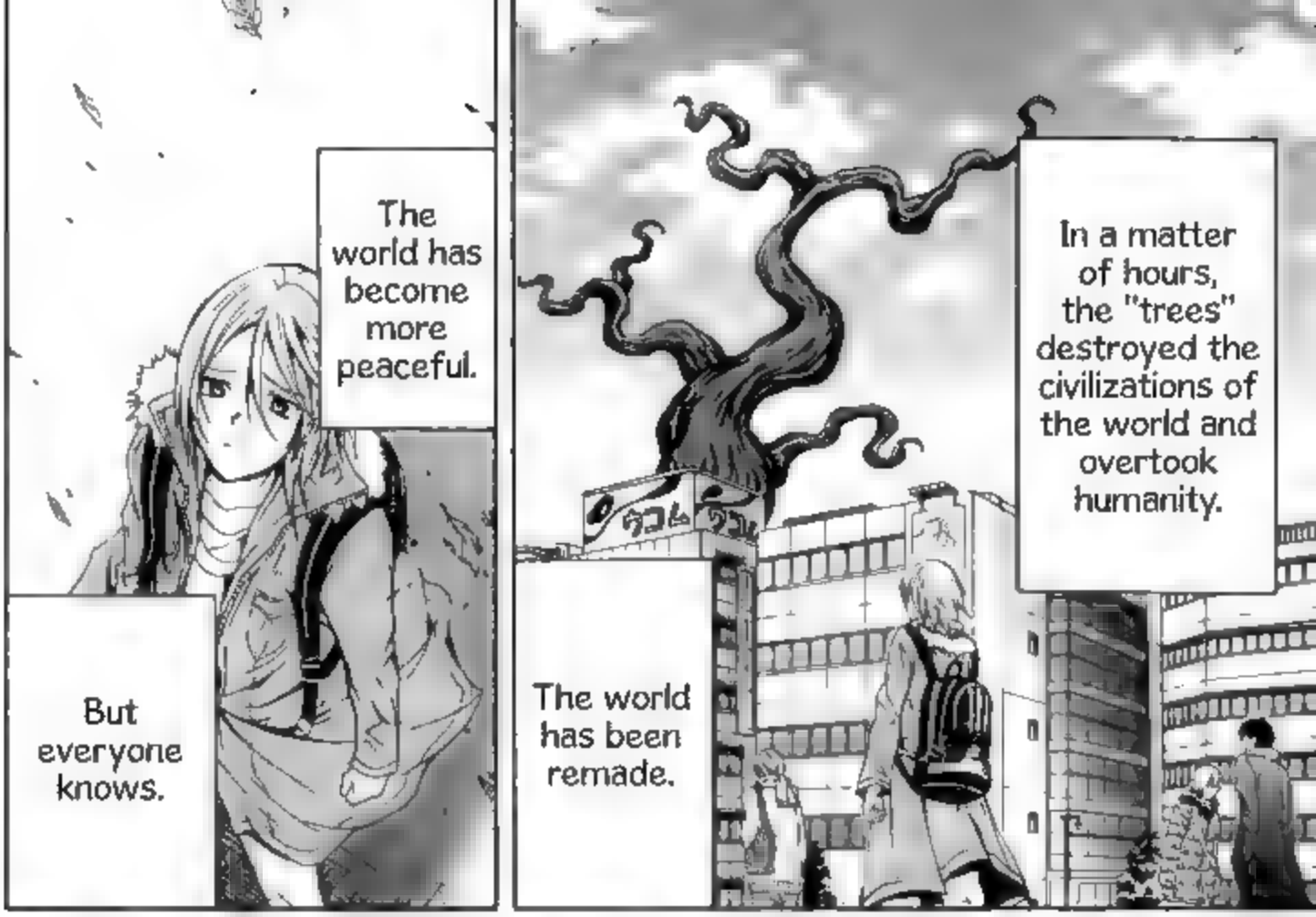

The criminal and violent organizations trying to take advantage of the chaos...
Images of the trees often appeared on TV or on the internet, broadcast as a warning.

Furthermore, the "trees"
Seem to be interacting with the natural world all over the globe.

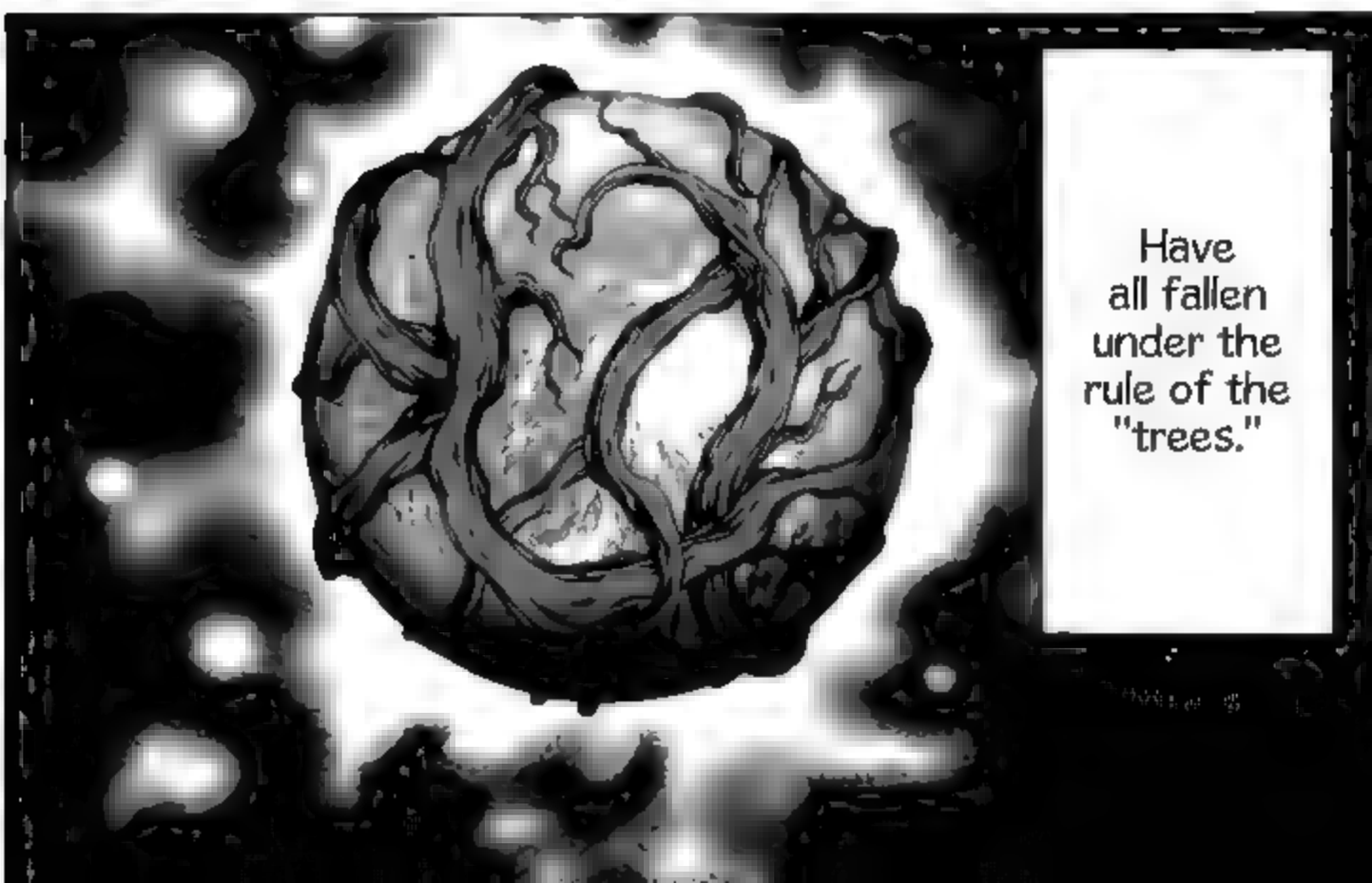

Problems of water and food seem to have been solved too...


Terra-forming the deserts...
Pollution has reversed as well, and drought-stricken lands have regained their vitality.

The world now is more prospe-rous and peaceful than ever before.

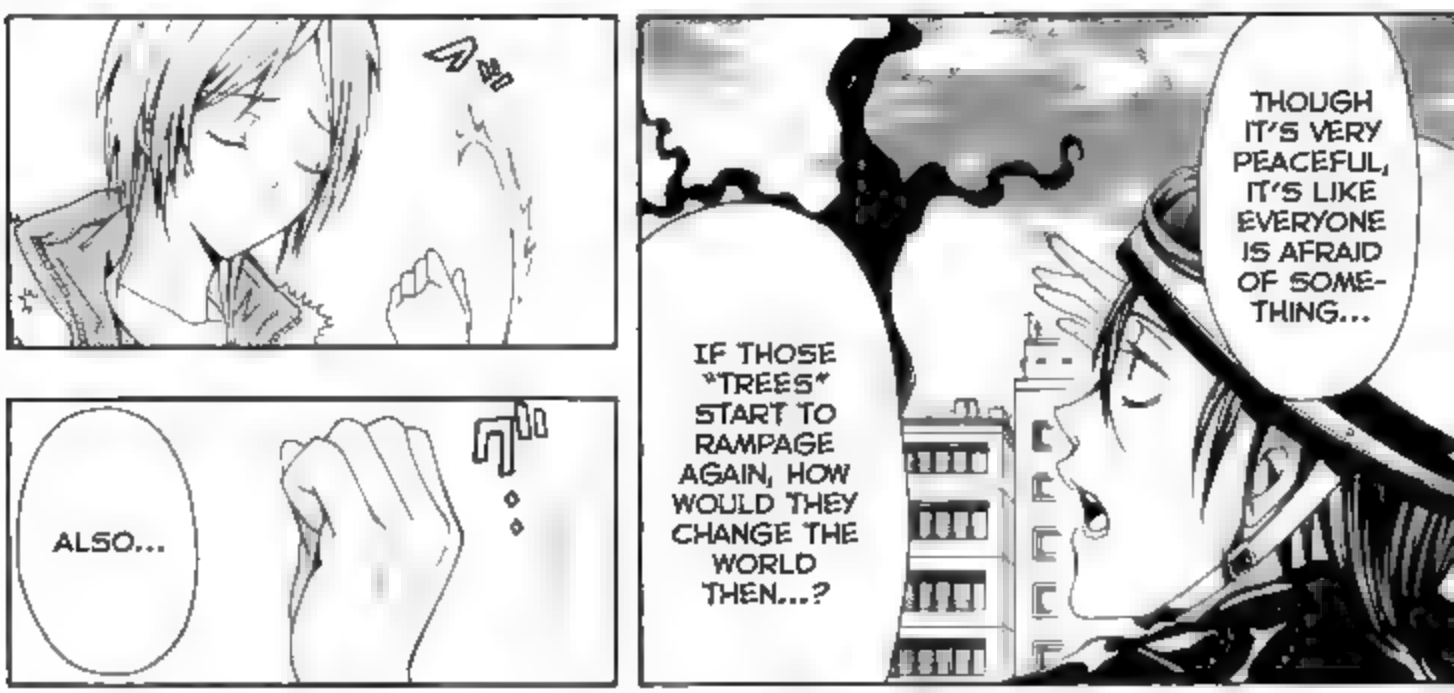

The world has become more peaceful.
But everyone knows.
In a matter of hours, the "trees" destroyed the civilizations of the world and overtook humanity.
The world has been remade.

We...


Have all fallen under the rule of the "trees."

IN THESE STRANGE TIMES...
OF COURSE MY GIRLFRIEND WOULD LIKE TO FIND A RELIABLE MAN, AS WELL...
はぁぁ...
HANEMURA-SAN.
SFX.AHAHA...
SO YOU ARE GOING TO MT. FUJI!
I...
Seem to be the "Magician of Zetsuen"...
So...
ズカン!

I have to revive that "Tree of Zetsuen" on Mt. Fuji...
Defeat these disgusting trees... and let the world go back to the way it was.

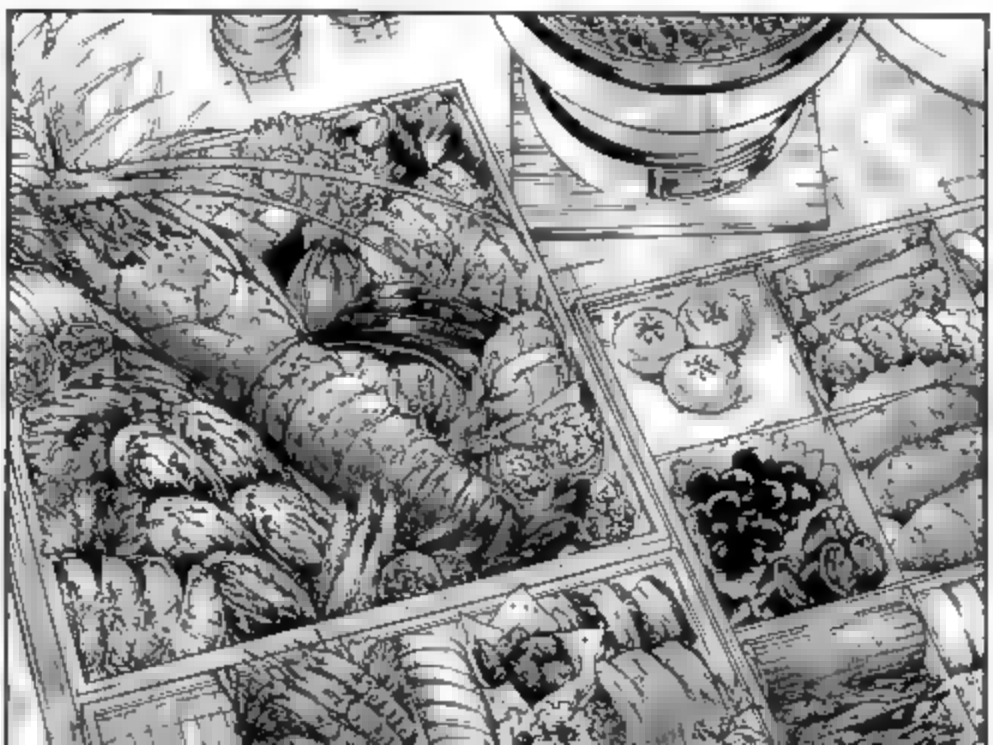

THOUGH IT'S VERY PEACEFUL, IT'S LIKE EVERYONE IS AFRAID OF SOME-THING...
IF THOSE "TREES" START TO RAMPAGE AGAIN, HOW WOULD THEY CHANGE THE WORLD THEN...?
ALSO...

IF THESE "TREES" WERE TO DISAP-PEAR,
MAYBE MY GIRLFRIEND WOULD COME BACK...!
YOU'RE STILL OBSESSED WITH HER, HUH..

SO THEN...
I'M OFF!

IS THAT GUY GOING TO BE ALRIGHT...

We've waited a long time for you!
チョイ
チョイ



ARE WE GOING TO CELEBRATE NEW YEAR'S IMMEDIATELY AFTER I'VE AWOKEN FROM A MONTH OF SLEEP?
Please sit down, sit!
THANK MAGIC. YOUR DIGESTIVE FUNCTIONS HAVEN'T WEAKENED.
THERE'S STEW...
AND A LOT OF SIDE DISHES!
NICE TO MEET YOU.
FUWA MAHIRO-KUN.
SO EAT YOUR FILL.
I'M HAYAKAWA TAKUMI.
FORMER COUNSELOR TO THE CHIEF OF THE IRON SICKNESS COUNTERMEASURE HEADQUARTERS.

THANKS TO THIS FRIENDSHIP, I'VE GOTTEN A LOT OF CHALLENGING MISSIONS.
THIS IS MY RESIDENCE. SHE'S EVANGELINE YAMAMOTO.
EVERYONE CALLS HER FRAULEIN YAMAMOTO. SHE'S MY FRIEND.
SO YOU WERE THE ONES MOVING THE TROOPS BEHIND THE SCENES?
WELL, I WAS FREE... CALL IT VOLUNTEERING.
I RECEIVED PERMISSION TO USE FIREARMS AS A RESULT, TOO.
THEY ESTABLISHED A NATIONAL ORGANIZATION CAPABLE OF DEFT, EFFICIENT ACTION.
UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES UNBEKNOWNST EVEN TO US,
.....
HIS GRANDFATHER WAS A FRIEND OF MAYA-SAMA, THE HEAD OF THE KUSARIBE CLAN.
THEN, WHEN MAGIC APPEARED AS A SOCIETAL PROBLEM...

GRAND-FATHER AND THAT MAYA PERSON DIED LONG AGO. THE LINK WITH THE KUSARIBE CLAN DISAP-PEARED AS WELL.
THOUGH IT'S CALLED ORGANIZA-TION, IT'S NOT SOME AMAZING THING.

THE CLAN AGREED TO COOPERATE ONCE MORE
BECAUSE SUCH EN-ORMOUS HARMS HAVE COME ABOUT.

AFTER THE IRON SICKNESS APPEARED, INFORMATION COLLECTION WAS A TOTAL MESS.
THE PEOPLE THAT REMAINED HAD THIS HALF-DOUB-TING, HALF-BELIEVING ATTITUDE TOWARDS MAGIC.

WE STILL FAILED.
IN THE END...

WE HAVE TO RELY ON YOSHINO-KUN!
INDEED, NOW...

HE'S IN BETTER CONDITION THAN YOU. AND SMARTER.
HE'S ACTING SEPARATELY FROM US, BUT DON'T WORRY.

YOSHINO ALRIGHT?
IS...

SINCE HAKAZE'S TRAVELING ALL OVER THE PLACE, THEY WENT TOGETHER.
BUT AS FOR YOSHINO-KUN...

WHY?
HAKAZE'S ALL OVER THE PLACE...?

不破家之墓
TO SEE WITH HER OWN EYES HOW THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" HAS CHANGED THE WORLD.

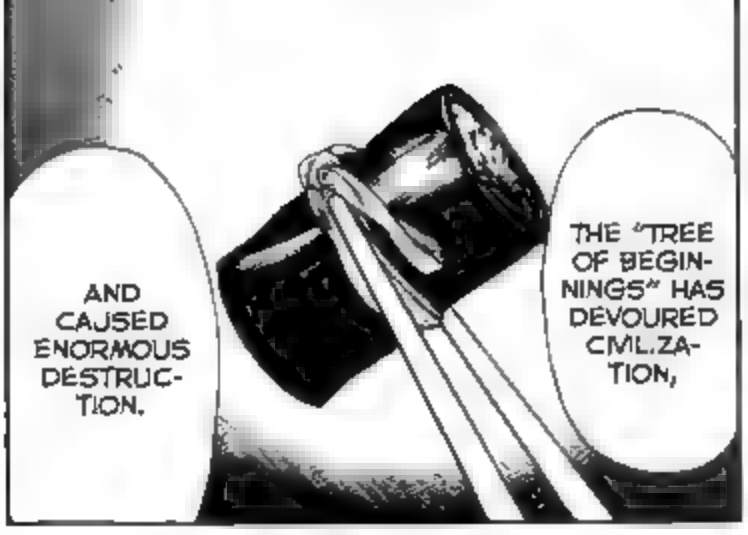
Aika.
I clearly set out on this journey to find the culprit that murdered you.

But there's no turning back now.

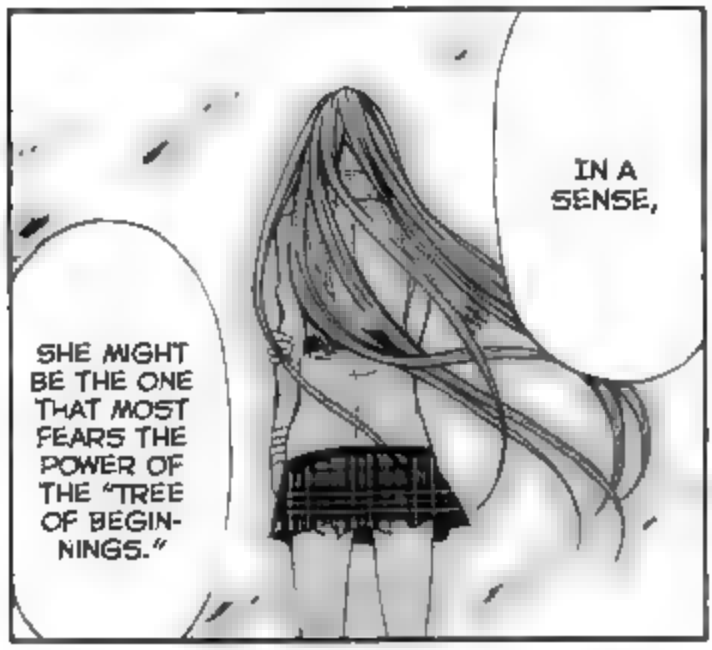
The world has changed a great deal...
Yoshino.
WHAT KIND OF GIRL WAS FUWA AIKA?
IT SEEMS LIKE SHE'D BE A GIRL OF PRETTY NASTY CHARACTER...
SHE USED TO BE PRETTY NASTY, BEFORE...
THAT... WELL... YOU SEE...
SINCE SHE WAS MAHIRO'S SISTER...
YOSHINO, IF MAHIRO WAKES UP...
LET ME MEET THAT "BOYFRIEND" AS WELL...
IF YOU ASKED AIKA-CHAN'S BOY-FRIEND, YOU MIGHT GET AN ENTIRELY OPPOSITE ANSWER.
THAT'S A PRETTY HARSH WAY OF PUTTING IT.

That guy is me...
I WANT TO SEE WHAT KIND OF GUY HE MIGHT BE...
DARING TO SECRETLY DATE THAT MAHIRO'S LITTLE SISTER... WHAT KIND OF FEARLESS GUY IS HE?
IN THE END...
MAYBE I CAUSED THEIR DEATHS...
I'LL APOLOGIZE TO THEM ONCE MORE.
FUWA AIKA, AND HER PARENTS.
No...

Just how many...
Lives have I sacrificed?


AND CAUSED ENORMOUS DESTRUCTION.
THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" HAS DEVOURED CIVILIZATION,

IS THAT KIND OF DESTRUCTION AND BENEVOLENCE RIGHT OR WRONG?
AT THE SAME TIME, BY RECONSTITUTING THE WORLD, IT HAS BROUGHT PEACE AND EVEN RENEWED THE ENVIRONMENT.


IN A SENSE,
SHE MIGHT BE THE ONE THAT MOST FEARS THE POWER OF THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS."

THAT PRINCESS ...
MUST BE QUITE TROUBLED AS TO WHETHER OR NOT TO FACILITATE THE COMPLETE AWAKENING OF THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS," RIGHT?

THE PRINCESS...
AFTER THE TWO OF YOU COLLAPSED AT THE BASE OF MT. FUJI...

.....

USED THE SACRIFICES THAT WE HAD PREPARED TO SEAL THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN".
THE MOVEMENTS OF THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" WERE HALTED AS WELL.
THAT YOSHINO BOY DIDN'T SUFFER ANY INJURIES THAT WERE TOO SERIOUS, AND WAS SAVED AS WELL.

GRAND-FATHER DIED FROM A STROKE DUE TO HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE.
AFTER-WARDS, WE HAVE BEEN VERY STRINGENT WITH THE USE OF SALT.
SO BLAND.

AFTER THE "TREE'S" MOVEMENTS STOPPED,
HAKAZE-SAN RE-COGNIZED REALITY AS WELL.
I SEE...
EVEN MAG C IS HELPLESS IN THE FACE OF LIFESTYLE D STUR-BANCES.

Absor-
bing?
...Turning into metal?

IN PAR-
TICULAR,
WITH
REGARDS
TO THE
"TREE OF
BEGINNINGS"
TURNING
LARGE
NUMBERS
OF HUMANS
INTO METAL
AND THEN
ABSORBING
THEM... IT
CAME AS
A GREAT
SHOCK
TO HER.
INCLUDING
THE VICTIMS
OF THE IRON
SICKNESS...
THERE WERE
PROBABLY
ALREADY
2 BILLION
CASUALTIES.

AFTER
TURNING
LIVING
THINGS
INTO
METAL,
THE
"TREE OF
BEGIN-
NINGS"
TURNS
THEM INTO
ITS OWN
POWER.

AS A RESULT,
THERE WERE
NO BODIES
LEFT BEHIND...
THEY WERE
LITERALLY
SWALLOWED,
AS THE
STORIES SAY.
THOUGH WE
HAD ALREADY
SUSPECTED IT
BECAUSE OF
THE IRON
SICKNESS,
THAT KIND OF
METAL TRANS-
FORMATION
AND ABSORP-
TION... THAT
WAS BEYOND
EXPECTATIONS.

IS THAT
OK?

A SOCIETY
WITHOUT
BODIES OR
EVIDENCE
OF DES-
TRUCTION
WON'T HAVE
ANY PRO-
BLEMS.
BUT A
WEEK
LATER,
THE
WORLD
SETTLED
DOWN.

DON'T YOU THINK IT'S HORRIFYING THAT THE WORLD IS SO PEACEFUL?
IT'S RIDICULOUS.
IN JUST SEVEN DAYS, EVERYTHING HAS RETURNED TO NORMAL... THE PHONES WORK, AND THE ELECTRICITY IS RUNNING ONCE MORE.
YOU CAN STILL BUY RICE BALLS AND MILK AT THE CONVENIENCE STORE, TOO.
MILK

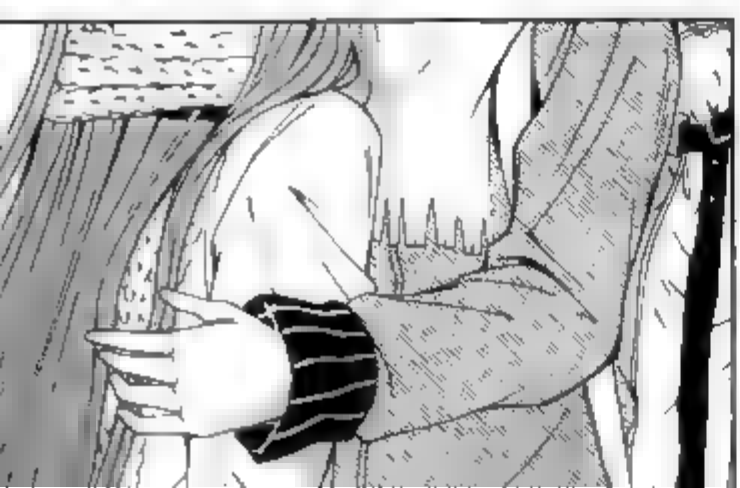
NO ONE COULD HAVE PREDICTED THIS.
THAT THINGS WOULD END UP LIKE THIS.
Keep Out

IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT, HAKAZE-SAN.

IF IT WERE TO AWAKEN COMPLETELY, THEN JUST AS SAMON SAID ..
THERE WOULD BE NO TURNING BACK.
I MIS-JUDGED THE STRENGTH OF THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS."
THAT ALL OF THIS HAPPENED WITH JUST PART OF IT AWAKE...

YEAH...
MAYBE IF IT AWOKE COMPLETELY, NOTHING WOULD HAPPEN...
BUT MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE IT ONLY PARTIALLY AWAKENED.
Am not even sure of what right anymore.
But I...

Every-
thing
else will
be, too...



Your
town...
your
friends...
Were taken
away just
like that...

IT'S NEW YEAR'S!
LET'S GO EAT SOME-THING GOOD.
LET'S LEAVE.
NOW THAT THE WORLD IS AT PEACE, HAKAZE WON'T THINK ABOUT LETTING THE TREE AWAKEN COMPLETELY ANYMORE.
ISN'T THIS WHAT YOU WERE HOPING FOR ALL ALONG?
BUT SAMON...

INDEED.
YOU DON'T WANT TO AGGRAVATE THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" AND THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN" ANYMORE.
YOU WANT TO PRESERVE THE STATUS QUO, DON'T YOU?
WE'RE AFRAID HOWEVER, THAT WE CAN'T WIN AGAINST PEACE.
SUDDEN CHANGES MIGHT LEAD TO MORE CASUAL-TIES.
WHILE REMAINING MINDFUL OF THE STATUS QUO,
WE'RE CAREFULLY PLANNING OUR NEXT STEPS.
IN THAT CASE...
WHY DID YOU LET ME WAKE UP?
I JUST KNOW EXTRA-NEOUS THINGS...
AND I ONLY THINK OF MYSELF...

SOMEONE LIKE ME IS QUITE INCOMPATIBLE WITH YOUR CAREFUL PLANNING.
WOULDN'T IT HAVE BEEN SAFER TO KEEP USING MAGIC TO KEEP ME ASLEEP?
IT'S BECAUSE OF THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN."
THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN"...

WILL HE KILL THE PRINCESS AND REVIVE THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN"?
THOUGH WE DON'T HAVE CONFIRMATION OF HIS EXISTENCE, IF HE REALLY DOES EXIST,

IF HE REALLY WERE TO EXIST, WE MUST FIND H.M AT ONCE AND PLACE HIM UNDER OUR CONTROL
PERHAPS THE NEW STRIFE WOULD BE THE WORST POSSIBLE SITUATION

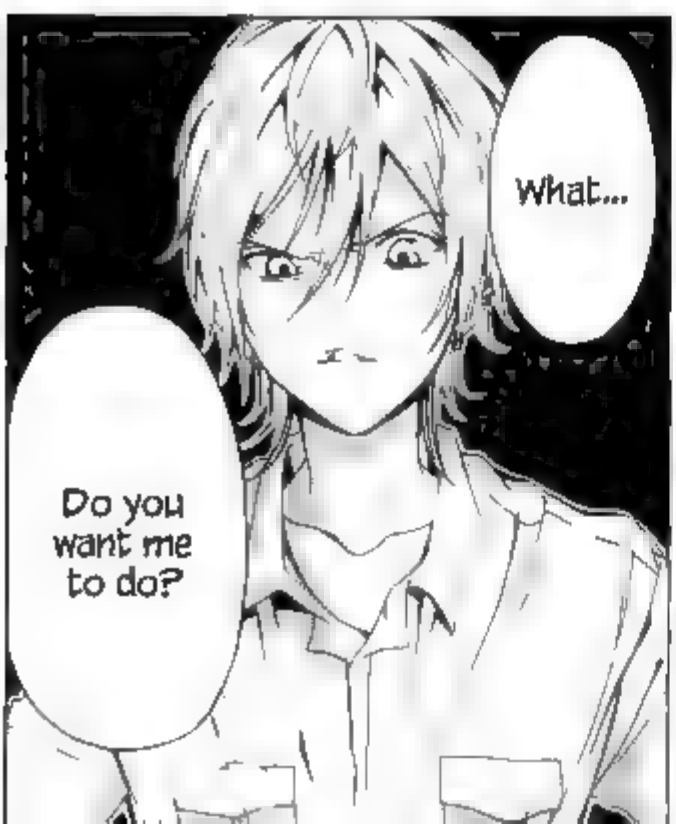
IF THAT WERE TO HAPPEN,

EVEN SO, CAN I HELP IN CATCHING THAT GUY?
MIGHT I JUST HINDER YOU GUYS?

THAT GUY IS UNDER SUSPICION FOR KILLING YOUR SISTER, AS WELL.
YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SETTLE WITH HIM, DON'T YOU?

WE'RE PREPARING TO FULFILL YOUR WISH.
SO THERE'S SOMETHING WE HOPE YOU CAN HELP US WITH.

INDEED.
THIS IS A TRADE.


What...
Do you want me to do?

FUWA MAHIRO.
CAN YOU KILL TAKIGAWA YOSHINO?

手洗所
TOILET

I'M SORRY.
PLEASE WAIT A MOMENT.

パコッ
Should I get in touch with Evangeline-san?

IT SEEMS HAKAZE-SAN REALLY DISLIKES HER.
BUT...

UM... EXCUSE ME.
I'M TRYING TO GET TO MT. FUJI...

うーん

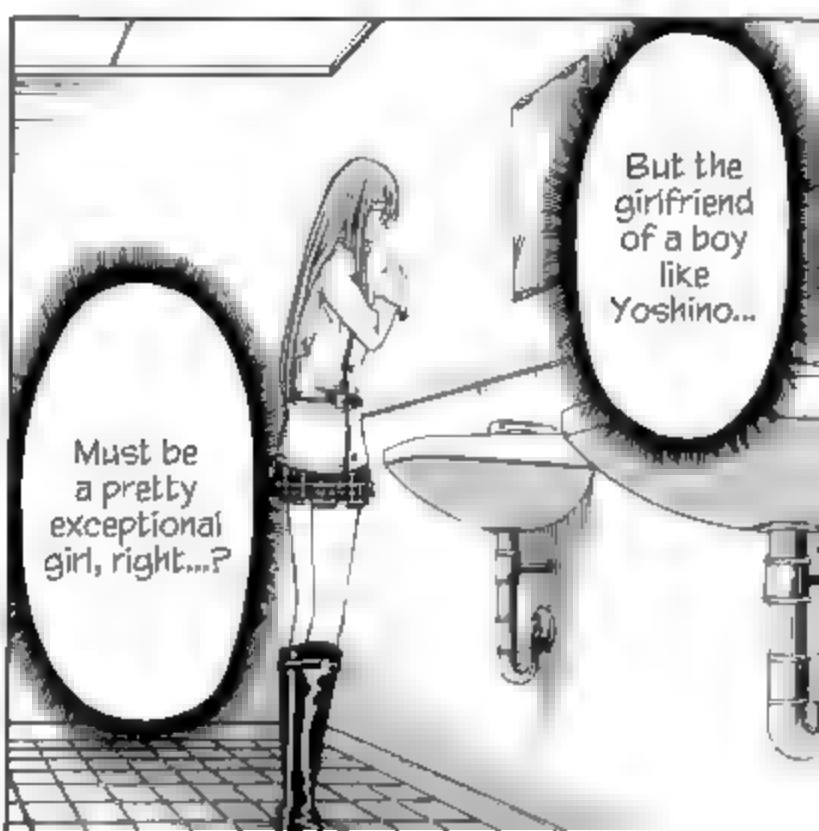
DO I TRANSFER HERE?
Damnit... I let Yoshino see my pathetic side again.
I can't be like this!
Yoshino wasn't supposed to accompany me to begin with.
Now I have to reconsider bringing him along...
But he can't go back to his parents either.
I'm just causing trouble...
:
:

Just because he's like that, Yoshino keeps throwing me for a loop.
It's so pathetic!

No, it's Yoshino's fault!
That guy's just too nice. He should have refused when he had the chance!

That pasty-faced brat!
He might get dumped!

Come to think of it, doesn't that guy have a girlfriend?!
This isn't the time for him to be following me around!


But the girlfriend of a boy like Yoshino...
Must be a pretty exceptional girl, right...?

Hmph.
As if I care.

This boy is the kind that's difficult to pull a one-over on.
As I thought...

CAN I KILL YOSHINO?
OY... JUST WHAT HAPPENED WHILE I WAS ASLEEP?

Fallen in love with Takigawa Yoshino.

YEAH.
BUT THIS CONCERNS THE FATE OF THE WORLD.
Hakaze...
Has fallen in love with Yoshino?
.....
HEY YOSHINO...
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE THIS TIME?

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ZETSUEN NO TEMPEST

by SHIRODAIRA Kyou and SAIZAKI Ren

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Zetsuen no Tempest ch 17

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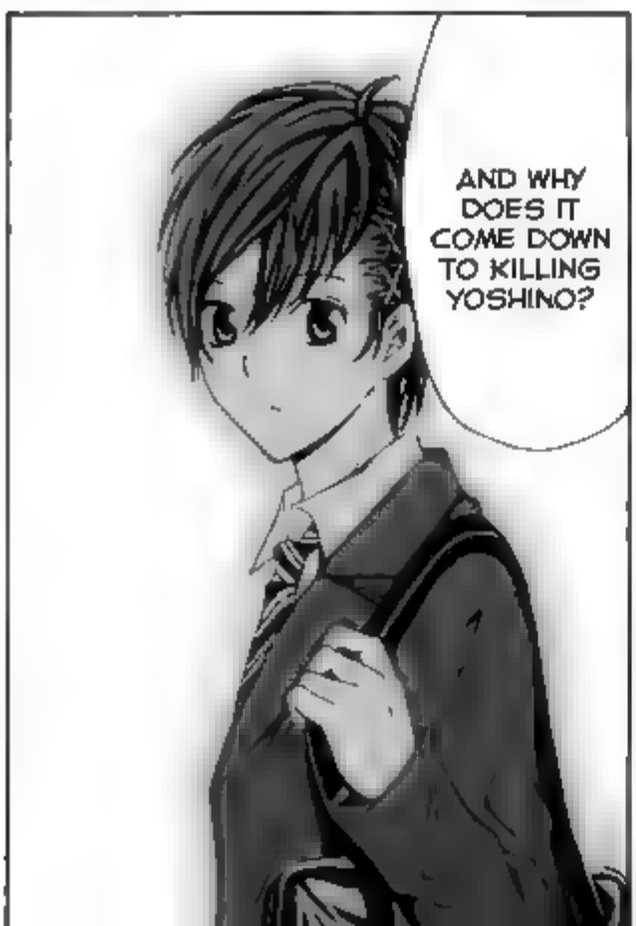
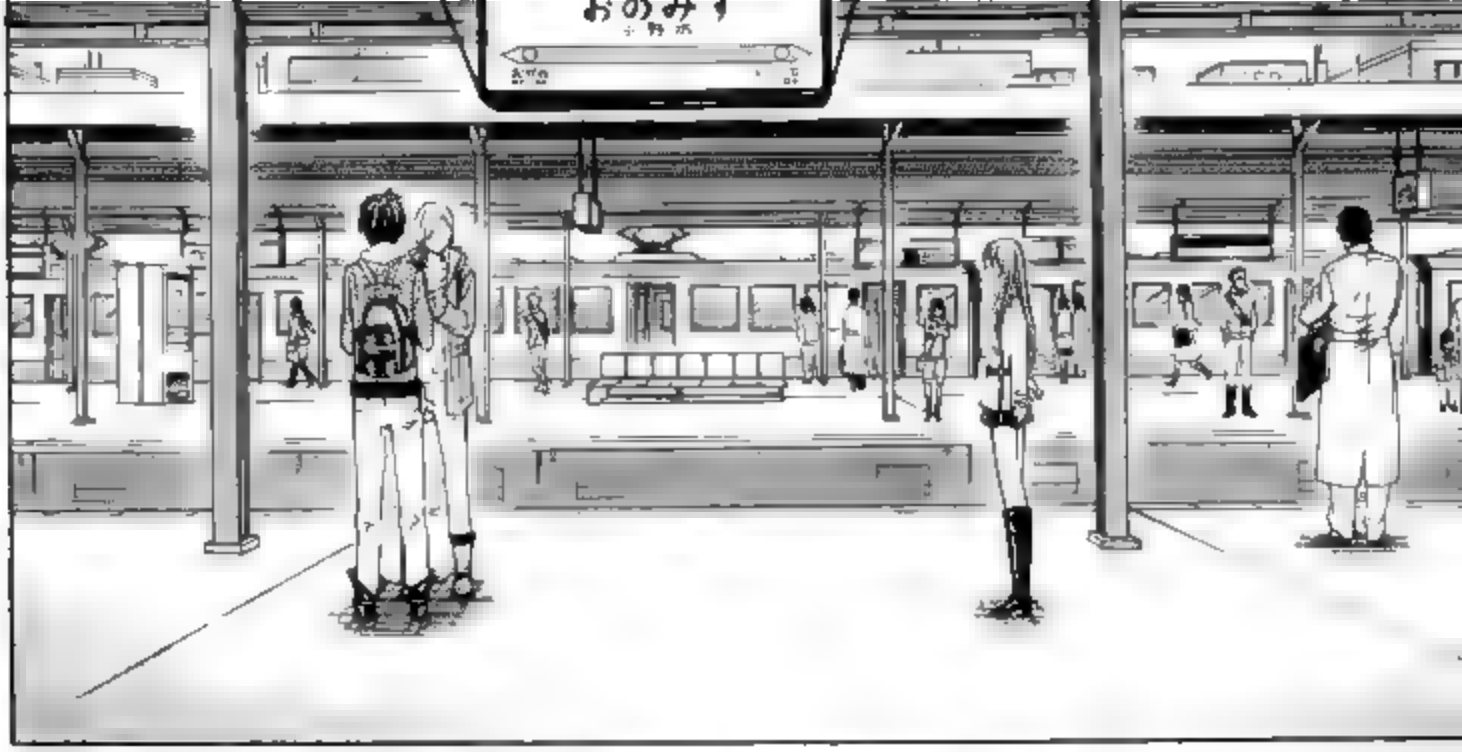
Chapter 18 - What Do You Think Will Happen?


AND WHY DOES IT COME DOWN TO KILLING YOSHINO?

I DON'T GET IT.
WHAT DOES HAKAZE FALLING FOR YOSHINO HAVE TO DO WITH THE FATE OF THE WORLD?

IT'S NOT THAT DIFFICULT A MATTER.
NOR SOMETHING THAT TERRIBLE TO SPEAK OF.
THE WEATHER'S QUITE NICE.
WHY DON'T WE GO MAKE OUR PRAYERS FOR THE NEW YEAR?



I'm getting an unpleasant feeling.
But what a pretty girl...

WHO IS HE?
THAT GUY OVER THERE.
ドサッ
TOILET

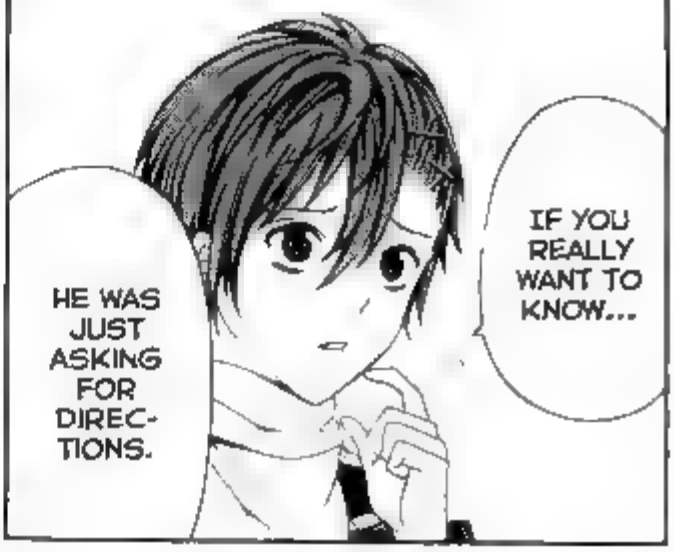
I GOT A BAD FEELING, IN ANY CASE.
I THOUGHT HE WAS GOING TO HURT YOU.

YEAH...

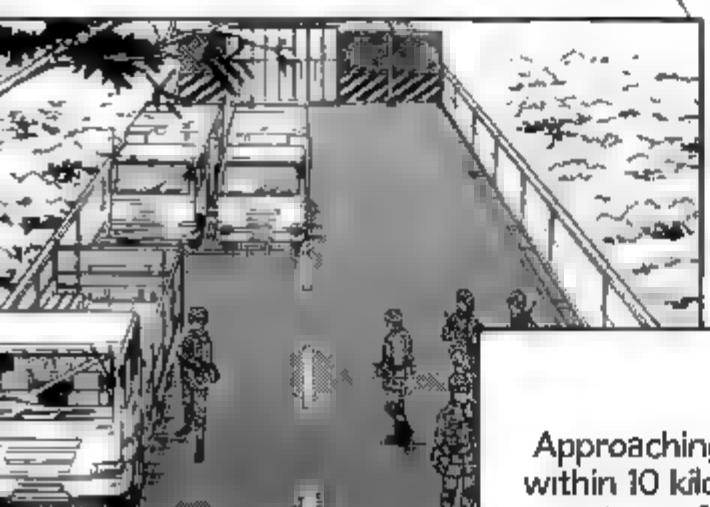
WHO? UM...
YOU SENT HIM FLYING WITHOUT KNOWING WHO HE WAS AT ALL?

SO...
WHO IS HE?

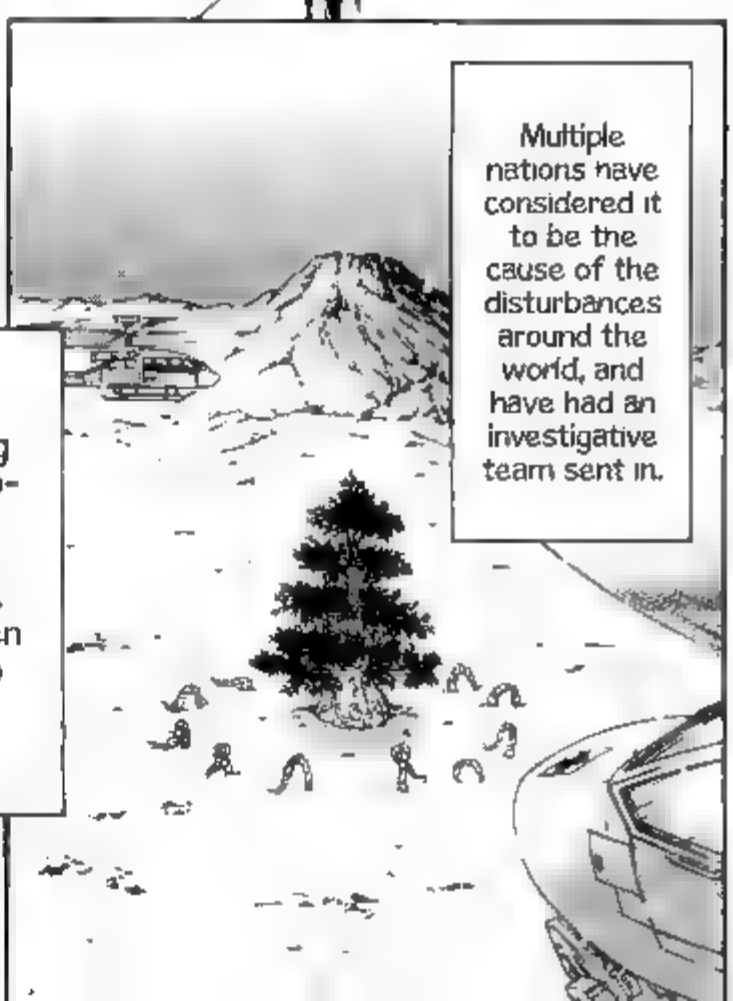
...AH.
IT CAN'T BE HELPED, HUH.
DID I DO SOME-THING WRONG?
ガーン
Can't be helped?!
It...



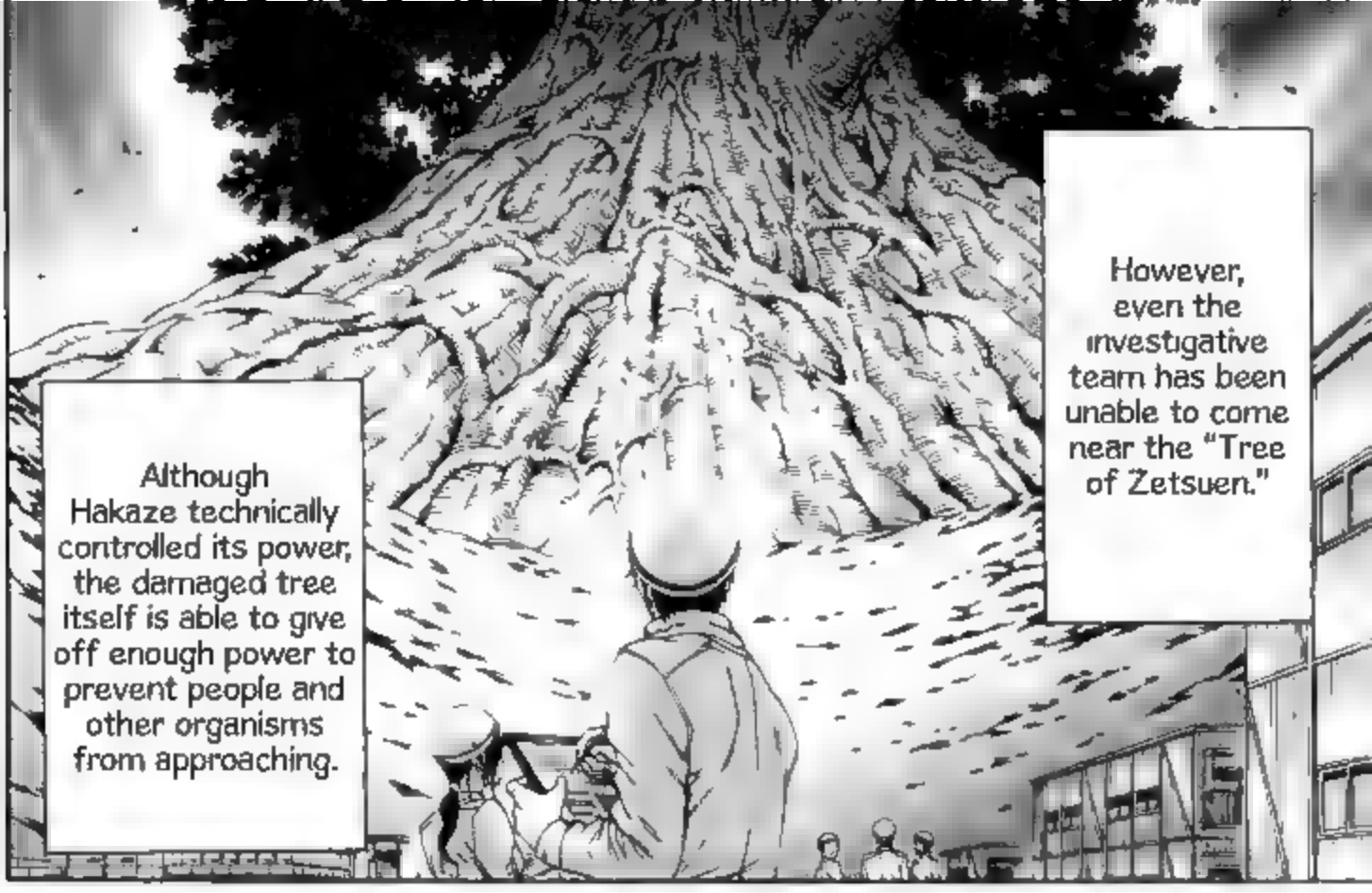
The "Tree of Zetsuen" is there.



Approaching within 10 kilo-meters of the base is prohibited... This has been reported to the public.



Multiple nations have considered it to be the cause of the disturbances around the world, and have had an investigative team sent in.


Although Hakaze technically controlled its power, the damaged tree itself is able to give off enough power to prevent people and other organisms from approaching.
However, even the investigative team has been unable to come near the "Tree of Zetsuen."

I KNOW THAT ENTRY IS PROHIBITED THERE.
BUT I GUESS I SHOULD SAY THAT I HAVE TO GO...

If that's the case, what is this person going there for?

YOU'VE HEARD THE RUMORS ABOUT THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN," RIGHT?
UMM...

OH?!
...I KNOW ABOUT THAT.
I EVEN KNOW WHO SPREAD THAT RUMOR.
IN ANY CASE,
THAT MAKES THINGS MUCH EASIER.
IT SEEMS LIKE...
I'M THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN."

THE PRINCESS IS LIKE THAT.

SHE'S LIVED A SHELTERED LIFE.

HOW CAN SUCH A SHELTERED YOUNG GIRL BE SO TOUGH?

THE PRINCESS IS ROYALTY PROTECTED BY THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS."
EVEN IF SHE FELL INTO DANGEROUS CIRCUMSTANCES, THE NATURAL LAW WOULD BE HER ALLY, AND SHE'D GET BY WITHOUT ANY PROBLEM AT ALL.

YEAH...
SHE REALLY IS UNNATURALLY OPTIMISTIC.
EVEN ABANDONED ON A DESERTED ISLAND, SHE WOULDN'T GET FLUSTERED.
AND PRECISELY BECAUSE OF THAT, SHE HARDLY KNOWS THE MEANING OF ANXIETY
SHE MIGHT EVEN BE AMUSED BY THE SITUATION.
YES. FURTHERMORE..
EVEN THOUGH YOU WERE THE ONE THAT DROPPED HER IN THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES.
BUT THIS TIME,
FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME, THE PRINCESS FELL INTO CIRCUMSTANCES OF ABSOLUTE DESPAIR AND HOPELESSNESS.
That young man...
That time, it was Takigawa Yoshino who saved the princess.

AFTER SEEING SUCH A HEROIC GESTURE,
IT WOULDN'T BE SURPRISING TO FALL FOR HIM, RIGHT?

Was able to bravely confront a situation that made even the princess despair.
And splendidly find a way out.

.....

WE'RE HERE.

BUT...
WOULD THAT HAKAZE REALLY FALL FOR A GUY SO EASILY?

FOR THE PRINCESS, WHO CAN'T EVEN RELY ON THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" ANYMORE, SHE MUST WANT SOMEONE SHE CAN ENTRUST HER HEART TO, RIGHT?
IT'D BE STRANGE NOT TO FALL FOR HIM.
AS I WAS SAYING, THE PRINCESS HAS HAD A SHELTERED LIFE.
FOR THE PRINCESS, WHO HAS ALWAYS BEEN INVINCIBLE UNTIL NOW,
TAKIGAWA YOSHINO-S THE FIRST "MAN SHE CAN RELY ON."
OF COURSE, WE ALSO WANTED HER TO BRING ALONG SOMEONE FROM THE CLAN SO THEY COULD KEEP AN EYE HER
AS EXPECTED, SHE REFUSED.
DURING THIS PERIOD OF DOCU-MENTING THE CHANGES AROUND THE WORLD,
ONLY TAKIGAWA YOSHINO HAS BEEN ALLOWED TO ACCOMPANY HER.
BUT...
SO HE'S BEEN REPOR-TING THE SITUATION TO US WITHOUT LETTING HAKAZE KNOW.
YOSHINO UNDER-STANDS OUR INTEN-TIONS AS WELL.

SO SHE'S ALWAYS ROCKED BACK AND FORTH.
SHE HAS ALL THESE UNRESOLVED FEELINGS SHE DOESN'T UNDER-STAND.
THE PROBLEM LIES WITH THE PRINCESS HERSELF
SHE HASN'T REALIZED THAT WHAT SHE FEELS FOR TAKIGAWA YOSHINO IS LOVE.
ARE YOU CAPABLE OF DOING SOMETHING SO EMBAR-RASSING?
SO TELL HER.
IS SHE AN ELEMEN-TARY SCHOOL STUDENT?
It'd be proble-matic for him to have feelings for Hakaze, right?
But Yoshino even has a girlfriend.
...NO.
AND EVEN IF I DID, SHE PROBABLY WOULDN'T UNDER-STAND.
OH?
BUT YOSHINO IS A SERIOUS, GOOD BOY
YOSHINO LOOKS LIKE HE WOULDN'T HURT A FLY, BUT IN REALITY, HE'S NASTIER THAN ME...
BUT...
HAKAZE IS A BIT TOO LACKING IN TASTE, NO?

WOULD SUCH A GOOD BOY MAKE A DEAL WITH YOU GUYS BEHIND MY BACK,
AND ASK FOR WEAPONRY, NO LESS?
SO YOU REALIZED?
IT CAME TO ME AFTER LISTENING TO YOU GUYS.
IT WAS JUST A HUNCH.
YOU GUYS WERE ABLE TO JOIN FORCES SMOOTHLY, RIGHT?
AFTER THAT GUY JOINED IN, THE MILITARY JUST HAPPENED TO START MOVING TOO...

EVEN IF HE'S A FRIEND, HE BETRAYED YOU...
AND THAT DOESN'T MAKE YOU ANGRY AT ALL?

FIRST OF ALL... YOSHINO ACTING BEHIND MY BACK,
IS QUITE A COMMON OCCUR-RENCE.

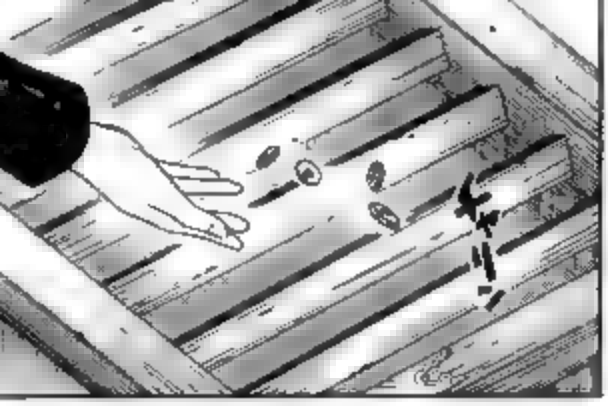
I ALREADY SAID, THAT IT'S QUITE A COMMON OCCUR-RENCE.

AND YOU CONTINUED BEING FRIENDS DESPITE THAT?

I'VE LOST TRACK OF HOW MANY TIMES THAT GUY'S GOTTEN IN MY WAY.
THAT GUY ALWAYS SEEMS TO GO ALONG WITH ME ON THE SURFACE, BUT IN ACTUALITY, HE'S ALWAYS PLOTTING THE EXACT OPPOSITE.

BUT...
THAT GUY IS PRETTY UNUSUAL BY NATURE, NO?

BUT IT'S NEVER TURNED OUT BADLY IN THE END.
I DON'T LIKE IT.


チャリン

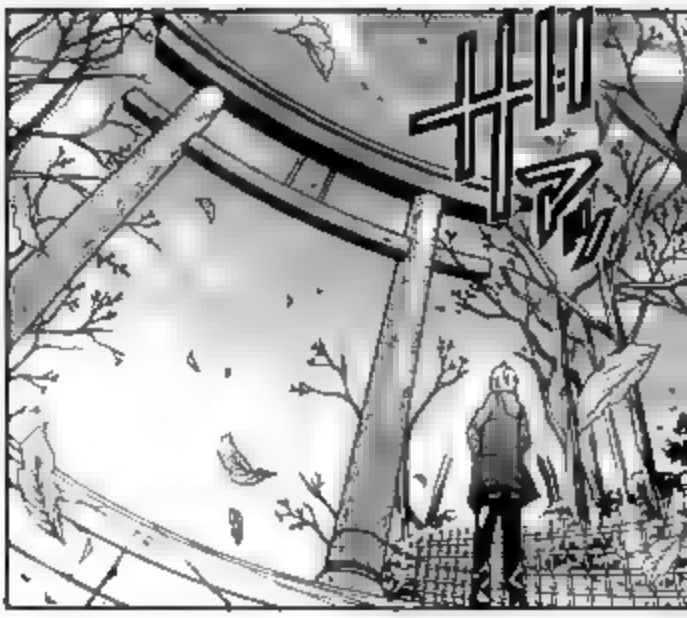
YOSHINO HASN'T REALIZED THAT HAKAZE LIKES HIM, RIGHT?
ODDS ARE,

HE HASN'T HAD THE LEISURE. BUT. .
HE HASN'T.

HIS NOT CATCHING ON. .
IS GOOD FOR US.

NO.
THAT GUY JUST HAS A FEW LOOSE SCREWS.

SO THEN...
HOW DOES THAT LEAD TO KILLING YOSHINO?



THE PRINCESS
IS UNSETTLED.

WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN?
FEARING HER OWN POWER AND BEING UNABLE TO SEE THE NEXT STEP TO TAKE...
AT THIS MOMENT, A "MAN SHE COULD RELY ON" APPEARED.
HE WILL CONTROL THE OUTCOME TO A TREMENDOUS EXTENT.
YOSHINO'S OPINIONS
WILL BE THE KEY TO DETERMINING WHAT SHE WILL DO IN THE FUTURE?
IF TAKIGAWA YOSHINO WERE TO SAY, "THE TREE OF BEGINNINGS SHOULD BE REVIVED," THEN SHE WOULD DO IT, RIGHT?
AND IF HE SAID "IT SHOULDN'T BE REVIVED," THEN SHE WOULDN'T.

IT'S LIKE THAT, RIGHT?
SHE'S FALLEN FOR HIM. . OR HAD HER HEART STOLEN AWAY.

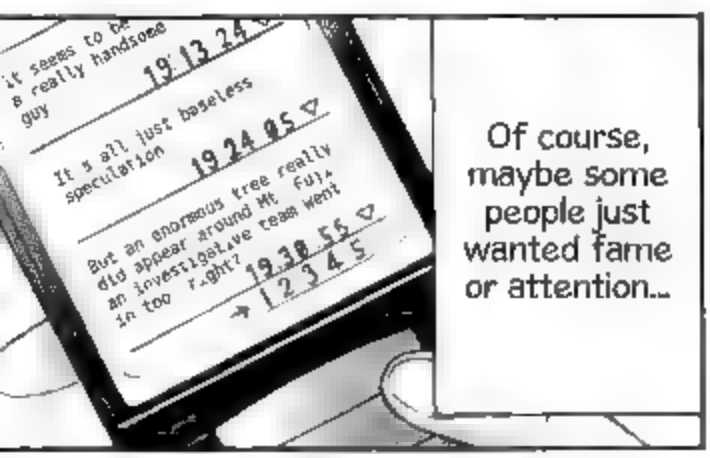
TAKIGAWA YOSHINO IS AT THE CENTER OF HER THOUGHTS.
RIGHT NOW THE PRINCESS TRUSTS THAT BOY MUCH MORE THAN SHE TRUSTS HERSELF OR THE "TREE OF BEGIN-NINGS."

WILL BE DECIDED BY TAKIGAWA YOSHINO.
YOU COULD SAY THAT FOR THE TIME BEING, WHETHER OR NOT TO REVIVE THE "TREE OF BEGIN-NINGS,"

In other words,

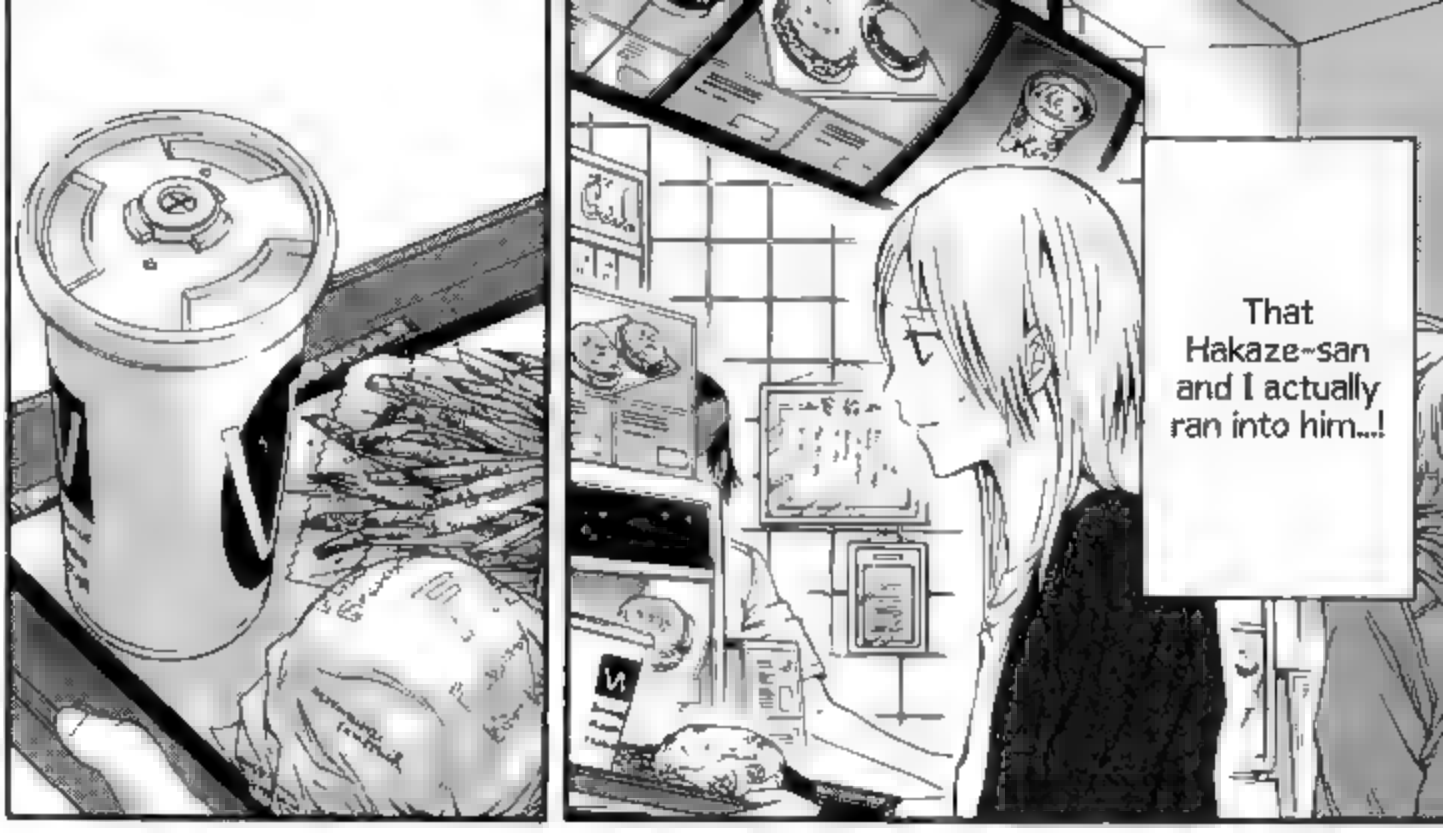
THE FATE OF THE WORLD
RESTS IN YOSHINO'S HANDS!

It's the legend of the "one who can defeat the 'Tree' controlling the world, the magician of the 'Tree of Zetsuen' who will save the world."
The rumors of the "Magician of Zetsuen" proliferating all over the internet and cell phone sites...


It's all just baseless speculation
But an enormous tree really did appear around Mt. Fuji. An investigative team went in too right?
Of course, maybe some people just wanted fame or attention...

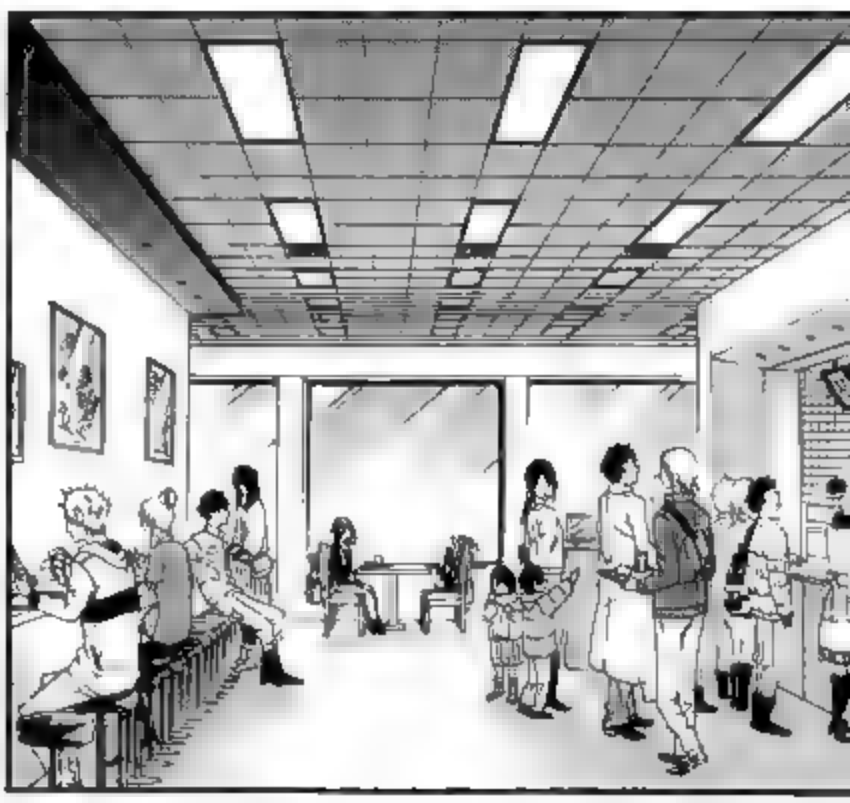
It was Hayakawa-san and Samon-san that spread this story.
Because of these rumors, information on the "Magician of Zetsuen" has bubbled up.

Could it be...


That Hakaze-san and I actually ran into him...!

YOSHINO.
DON'T BE FLUSTERED.

WE CAN'T CONFIRM THAT GUY IS THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN."
OR THE ONE THAT KILLED MAHIRO'S SISTER.



MAYBE HE'S JUST PLAYING DUMB. .
PERHAPS HE ALREADY KNOWS MY IDENTITY.

. . .WE WERE JUST LISTENING TO WHAT HE SAID.
BUT HOW MUCH DOES HE REALLY UNDERSTAND ABOUT THE SITUATION?

BUT,
WE CAN CONFIRM THAT HE IS INDEED A "MAGICIAN", RIGHT?

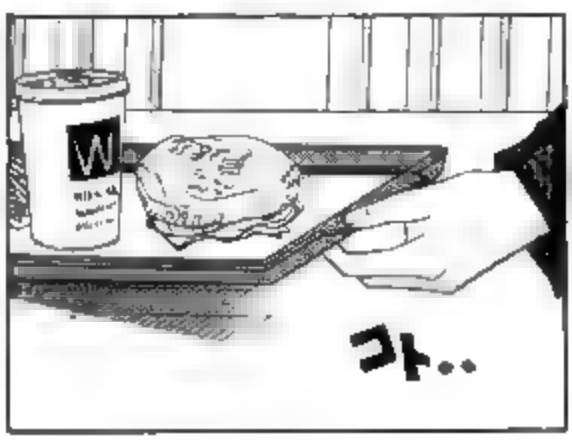
No matter what, you must protect yourself.
Let me talk to him for now.

Could they be lovers?!
Siblings?

The mood's gotten tense all of a sudden...
Who are those two people?

Com-pared to that, I...
Going out with such a pretty girl... I'm so jealous.

SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING.
AH...


W
ㅋㅏ..

DUE TO CERTAIN CIRCUM-STANCES, WE'VE BEEN WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE PAST YEAR.
BUT WE'RE NOT IN THAT SORT OF VULGAR RE-LATIONSHIP THAT YOU MIGHT BE THINKING OF.
DON'T BE MISTAKEN.

LET ME INTRODUCE MYSELF AGAIN I'M KUSARIBE HAKAZE.
AND THIS PERSON IS...

TAKIGAWA YOSHINO.

Is she like some sort of princess?
Does that make him your retainer?

That's such a grandiose way of speech.
But it still seems totally natural.

JUST WHEN,
DID YOU FIRST DISCOVER THAT "POWER" YOU JUST SHOWED US?

I'M HANEMURA MEGUMU.
UN. . I'M UN-EMPLOYED.
AND MY GIRLFRIEND RECENTLY DUMPED ME..

THIS STRANGE POWER SUDDENLY CAME FROM MY BODY.
NOT JUST THE WAY TO USE IT, BUT EVEN HOW TO CONTROL IT, SOMEHOW I GRASPED IT.
A...
A YEAR AGO.
AND THEN WHEN THAT "TREE OF ZETSUEN" NEAR MT. FUJI APPEARED,
MY POWER INCREASED, AND I'VE BECOME ABLE TO CONTROL IT FREELY.
WE..L, I SAY THAT, BUT I HAVEN'T USED IT TO DO ANYTHING.
.....
About a year ago... Is that when Samon started reviving the "Tree of Zetsuen"?
There's no contradiction between that and the awakening of his power.
HE KNOWS ABOUT THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSJEN" TOO...

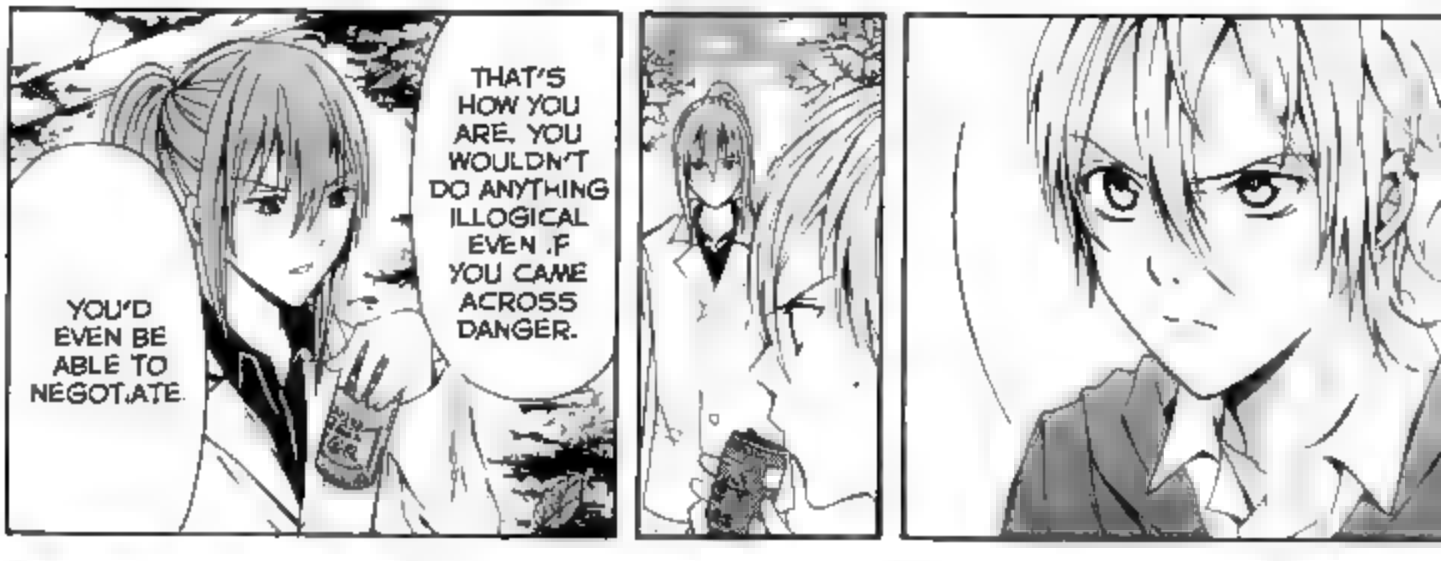
UMM. I'VE THOUGHT THAT I GAINED THIS POWER FOR THIS REASON...
AM I WRONG?
WHAT IF I SAID YOU WERE?
UMM...
THAT WOULD BE QUITE TROUBLING.
Your power...
Don't worry.

COULD VERY WELL ...
ANNIHILATE THIS ENTIRE RESTAURANT IN AN INSTANT.

HUH ?!
I...I WOULDN'T DO SOME-THING SO HORRIBLE!
YEAH...
IF YOU DID, I WOULD FIND IT QUITE THE INCONVE-NIENCE.

Really has no self-awareness?
This guy...
He hasn't real'zed that he possesses power that can destroy the entire world?
IT'S VERY FORTUNATE. TAKIGAWA YOSHINO,
HAS YET TO REALIZE THE PRINCESS' INFATUATION.

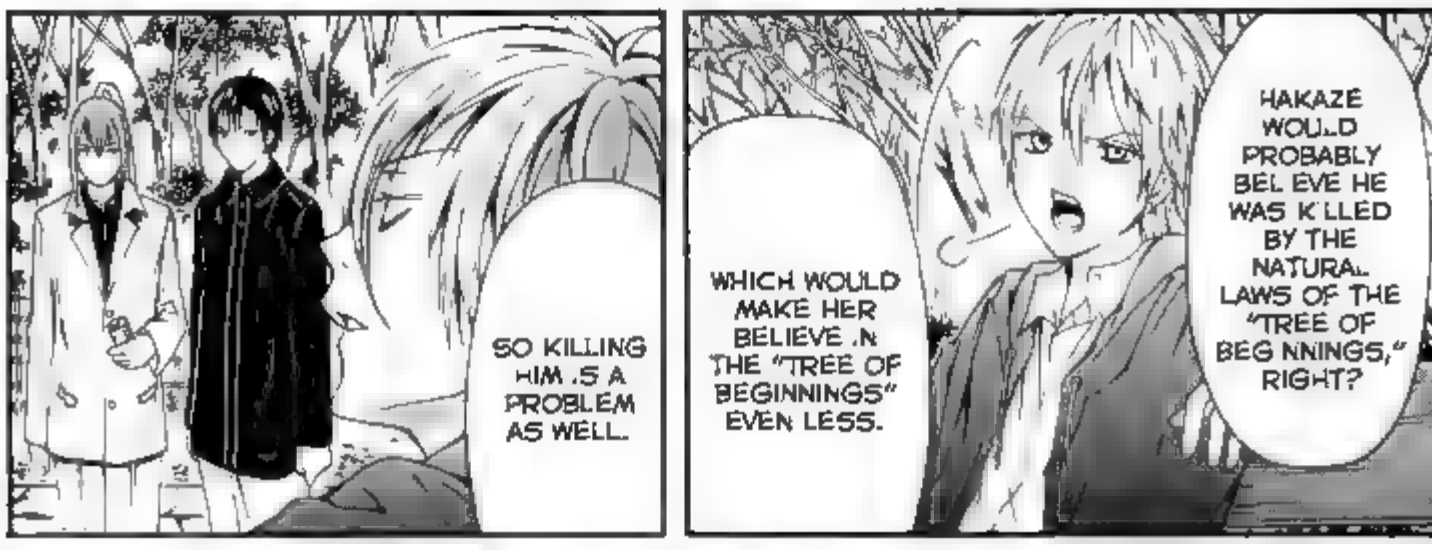
HE'S NOT THE KIND OF GUY THAT WANTS TO DO ANYTHING TO THE WORLD.
NOTHING WOULD HAPPEN
HE HASN'T REALIZED THE FATE OF THE WORLD RESTS IN HIS HANDS.
WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF HE WERE TO BECOME AWARE OF THIS?
ARE YOU CERTAIN OF THAT?


YOU'D EVEN BE ABLE TO NEGOTIATE.
THAT'S HOW YOU ARE. YOU WOULDN'T DO ANYTHING ILLOGICAL EVEN IF YOU CAME ACROSS DANGER.

HE HAS THE ABILITY TO SACRIFICE EVERYTHING IN ORDER TO KEEP MOVING FORWARD.
IF HE BELIEVES IN SOMETHING, THERE'S NO ROOM FOR NEGOTIATION OR LOGIC.
THAT BOY,
BUT THAT YOUNG MAN?

WE HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING WHAT THAT YOUNG MAN'S INTENTIONS ARE.
BUT REGARDLESS OF THAT, HE WON'T HESITATE IN PUSHING THE PRINCESS TOWARD A CERTAIN DECISION.
.....
Which is why...
IN THIS SENSELESS WORLD,
WHO CAN SAY WHAT SOMEONE IS CAPABLE OF DOING?
YOU INTEND TO KILL YOSHINO,
BEFORE THAT CAN HAPPEN?

IF TAKIGAWA YOSHINO WERE TO DIE, HOW WOULD THE PRINCESS REACT?
THAT IS A PROBLEM AS WELL.
WE ARE REQUESTING YOUR ASSISTANCE TO PREVENT THAT FROM HAPPENING.
WE DON'T WANT TO KILL CHILDREN EITHER.


SO KILLING HIM IS A PROBLEM AS WELL.
WHICH WOULD MAKE HER BELIEVE IN THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" EVEN LESS.
HAKAZE WOULD PROBABLY BELIEVE HE WAS KILLED BY THE NATURAL LAWS OF THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS," RIGHT?

ON THE CONTRARY, WE HOPE TO USE HIM TO CONTROL THE PRINCESS.
REGARDLESS, THE ACTIONS OF A GIRL IN LOVE ARE UNPREDICTABLE.
WE DON'T WANT TO KILL THAT YOUNG MAN EITHER.

AS HIS GOOD FRIEND OF MANY YEARS,
CAN YOU THINK OF ANY WAY TO GET LEVERAGE ON HIM?
WHAT ABOUT HIS PARENTS?
THOUGH WE HAVEN'T CONFIRMED THEIR WHEREABOUTS SINCE THE APPEARANCE OF THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS".
THE POSSIBILITY THAT THEY'VE ALREADY DIED IS QUITE HIGH.
DOES YOSHINO KNOW?
HE KNOWS.
BUT HE AGREED TO KEEP THIS A SECRET FROM THE PRINCESS.
THAT GUY, AGAIN..

SHE SHOULD BE.
MAYBE HE DIDN'T WANT TO GET HER INVOLVED? HE HASN'T EVEN TOLD US HER NAME.

WHAT ABOUT YOSHINO'S GIRL-FRIEND?
SHE'S FINE, RIGHT?

If the girl that he liked were still alive, Yoshino wouldn't do anything rash, right?
There's no need to worry at all, is there?

.....

If there's anything to worry about,
It's making sure these guys don't go crazy, right?

PLEASE DON'T TELL ANYBODY
THAT MY GIRLFRIEND WAS AIKA.

UNDER THESE CIRCUM-STANCES,
IT WOULD DEFINITELY BE TROUBLE FOR THOSE TWO TO FIND OUT, RIGHT?

THE MORE PEOPLE WHO KNOW,
THE GREATER THE CHANCES THAT IT'LL REACH MAHIRO AND HAKAZE'S EARS.

INDEED IT WOULD BE QUITE TROUBLING TO LET THOSE TWO KNOW
I CAN'T LOSE YOSHINO'S CONFIDENCE... AND I CAN'T REVEAL THE TRUTH OF THIS "GIRLFRIEND" TO HAYAKAWA EITHER.

BUT...
WHAT'S REALLY BEEN GOING ON IN YOSHINO'S HEART?

IT'S PROBABLY BEST IF NO ONE KNOWS.

OR HAS IT BEEN REPLACED BY SOMETHING EVEN MORE DANGEROUS?
HAS IT PLUNGED FURTHER INTO DARKNESS OR EMPTINESS, AS HAYAKAWA AND MAHIRO SUSPECT?

THE FIREWORKS FESTIVAL IS TODAY, AFTER ALL.
A YUKATA ?
YEAH... IT'S A YUKATA.
...UH...

I'VE HEARD THAT YOU DON'T WEAR UNDERWEAR WITH A YUKATA, TO AVOID HAVING THE LINES SHOW?
IS IT TRUE?
IT'S TRUE FOR THE TOP PART.
AS FOR THE BOTTOM... IT'S A SECRET.
BUT,
カラン
IF YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW SO BADLY,
I'LL ALLOW YOU TO VERIFY IT WITH YOUR OWN HANDS...
スス...

UH...I'M SORRY.
I ASKED A STUPID QUESTION.
AH...
HOW USELESS.
HAVEN'T YOU BEEN LIKE THIS SINCE WE MET?
NO, BUT YOU'RE NOT RELATED BY BLOOD.
YOU DO HAVE A NASTY SIDE, AIKA.
I'M MAHIRO'S SISTER, AFTER ALL.

ドドドド…
Well... I'm going out with Aika behind Mahiro's back.
I can't claim I'm kind either...
YOU'RE THE NASTY ONE, YOSHINO.
ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY THAT YOU'RE A KIND PERSON?
ン…
I happen to believe,
That you're the scariest person I know, Yoshino.

Did this person kill Aika?

Is he putting on a show so we'll let down our guard?

No matter what, I have to confirm he has an alibi...

The mood... is so heavy.

Wah... did I say something terrible?

Let me say it, Hane-mura.
Do you believe that you're the only magician?

If there's a magician on the side of the "Tree of the Zetsuen,"
Don't you believe there must be magicians on the side of the "Tree that controls the world" as well?

HUH?

A-
.....?

Why don't you try it?
If you think you can touch us,

カロン

A... barrier?!
No way... I'm trapped?!

HUH ?!

カチーン

I AM...
A MAGICIAN THAT IS YOUR ENEMY.

UNDER THESE CIRCUM-STANCES,
I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO SEAL YOU.

WE'RE BOTH MAGICIANS. WHY DON'T WE HAVE A CONTEST?
HOW ABOUT IT?

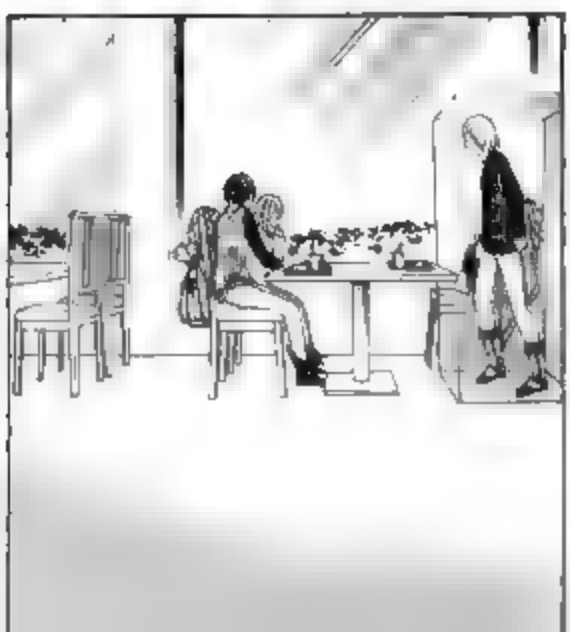
I'LL HELP AGAINST YOSHINO.
メキ…
YEAH...
IT WAS HARDLY SOMETHING TERRIBLE OR DIFF CULT TO UNDERSTAND, RIGHT?
ガラン
...I got it.
IN RETURN, YOU MUST HELP ME FIND AIKA'S KILLER.
HOW'S THAT FOR A TRADE?

.....

For the time being,
I will do as you say.

You owe me one, Yoshino.

I'll protect you along the way.



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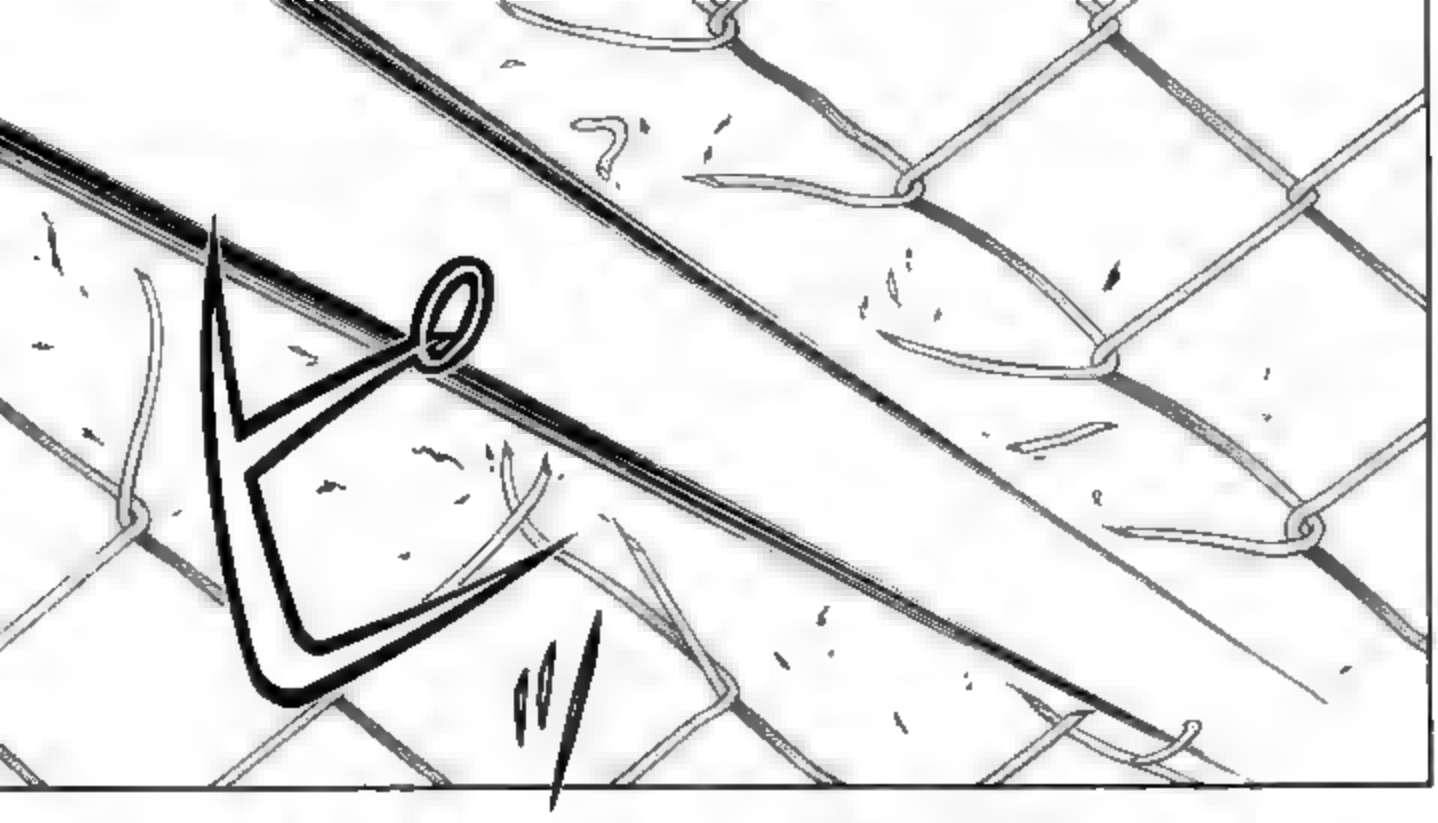
Chapter 19 – Unending Trouble



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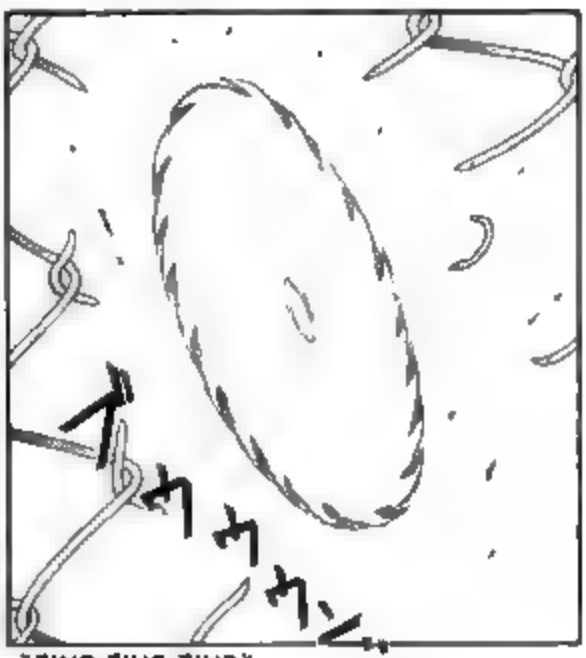
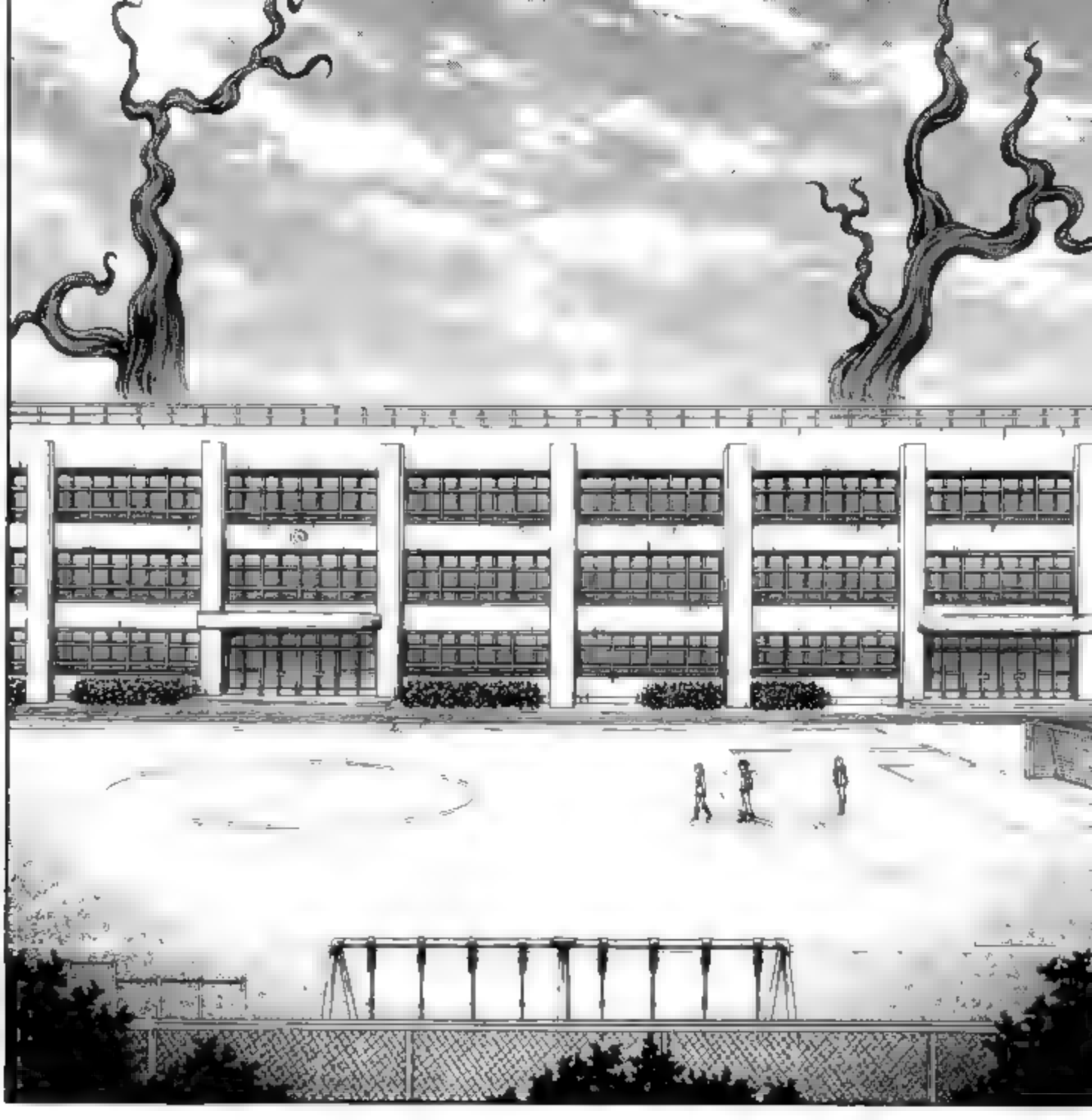

ZING ZING ZING

I'LL RESTORE IT AFTER THIS.
IT DOESN'T MATTER.

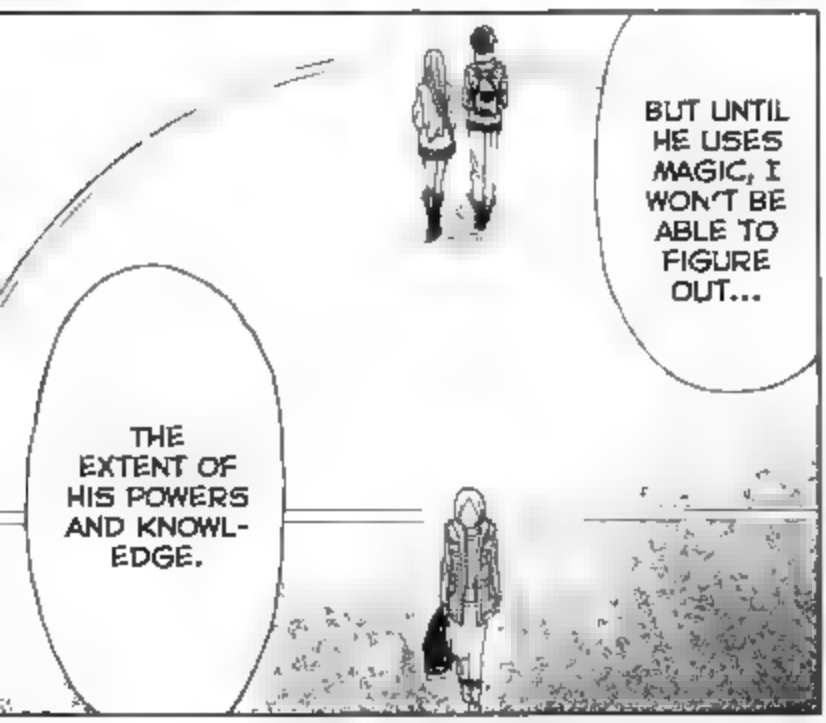
IS THIS OKAY?
DESTROYING THE FENCE JUST TO ENTER?



OKAY.

HANEMURA, THIS IS ABOUT A 20 METER DISTANCE.
IT'LL BE EASIER TO USE YOUR MAGIC FROM HERE.

WE JUST GOT HERE AND WE A..READY HAVE TO FIGHT THAT PERSON?
WON'T IT BE DANGE-ROUS?


BUT UNTIL HE USES MAGIC, I WON'T BE ABLE TO FIGURE OUT...
THE EXTENT OF HIS POWERS AND KNOWL-EDGE.

I DON'T KNOW,
WHAT WILL HAPPEN...

I WOULD NOT KNOW WHETHER OR NOT HE IS A MURDERER.

IN ADDITION,

If he is indeed the "Magician of Zetsuen," that would make him Mahiro's sister's killer as well.
I need to make sure Yoshino doesn't interfere.

I must prevent him from doing something rash and hurting himself.

IF I WERE TO LOSE,
THAT PERSON WOULD BE AMONG THE STRONGEST IN THE WORLD.

A..
トン
SINCE A PORTION OF THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" WAS AWAKENED, MY POWERS HAVE INCREASED.
DON'T WORRY.

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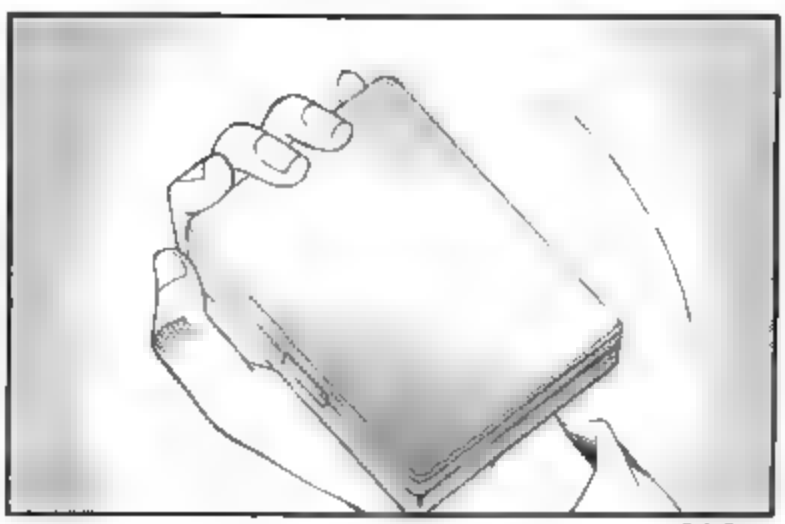


STAY BEHIND ME, YOSHINO.
IT'S SAFER THAT WAY.

ハアアアア

THE RULES ARE SIMPLE.
WE WILL BATTLE WITH OUR MAGIC POWERS UNTIL ONE OF MY KNEES TOUCHES THE GROUND.
WHEN THAT HAPPENS, IT IS YOUR VICTORY.
IF YOU WIN, I'LL TELL YOU WHATEVER IT IS YOU WANT TO KNOW.

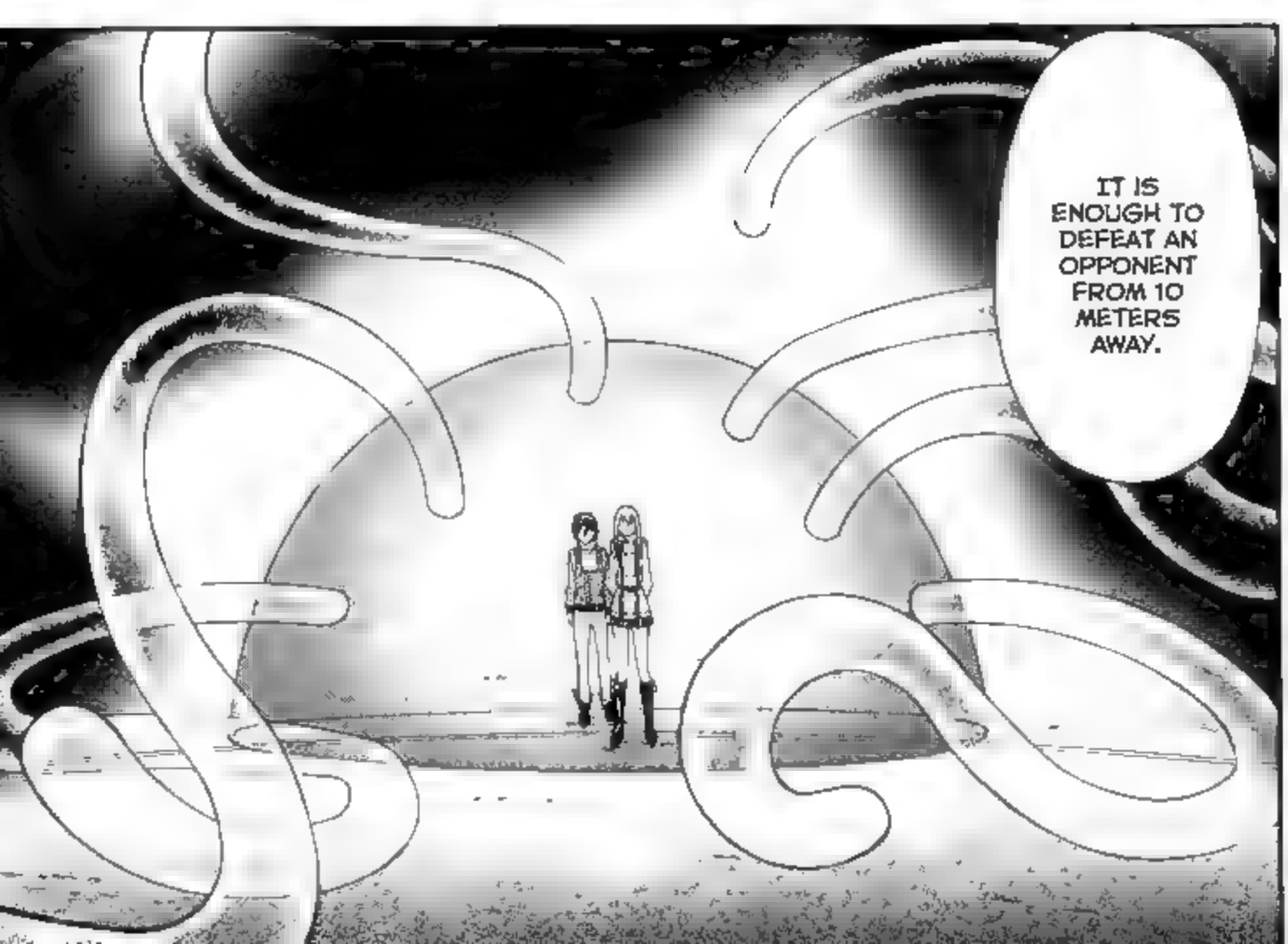
ERM...
IN WHAT WAY WOULD IT BE CONSIDERED MY LOSS?
DON'T WORRY.
I'LL HEAL YOU IF THAT HAPPENS.
What ?!
WHENEVER ONE OF YOUR ARMS BREAKS.
OR SOME-THING ALONG THOSE LINES.
"Tree within tree, oak within oak"
Heed my call.
SFX: CRACKS
HUH...?!

EH?
WHAT IS THIS?!

.....?
WHAT...?
WE OF THE KUSARIBE CLAN DO NOT POSSESS ANY OFFENSIVE MAGIC.
HOWEVER, WITH DEFENSIVE MAGIC, DEFEATING AN ENEMY AT LONG RANGE IS ALSO POSSIBLE.
Slide
AAHH!
DAMN ...
UGH!

THIS IS THE BASICS OF THE DEFENSIVE STANCE.
THE USER IS ABLE TO MANIPULATE THE FIELD USING THEIR IMAGINATION.
I HAVE STRENGTHENED THIS HEMISPHERIC TECHNIQUE WITH ANOTHER LAYER.
A HIGH LEVEL SKILL IS REQUIRED, AS WELL AS A LARGE DRAIN OF MAGIC POWER.
ガッ
HOWEVER,

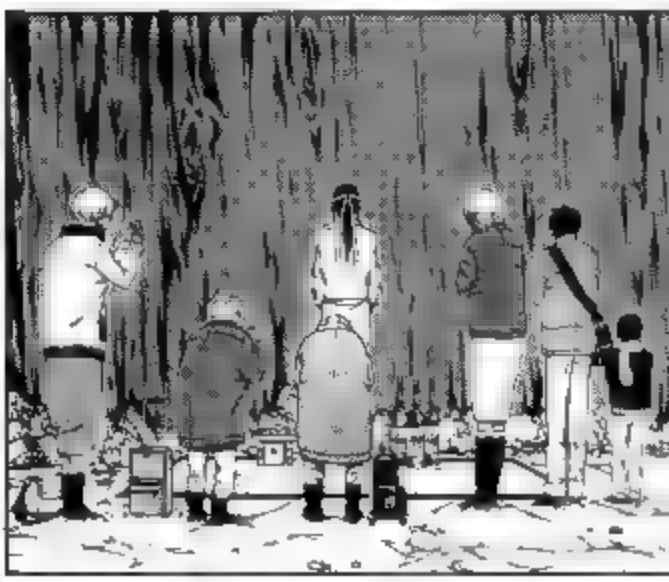
I CAN EASILY EXTEND MY RANGE LIKE THE ROOTS OF A TREE.
レェル
レェル
WITH JUST A SINGLE, ALMOST INSIGNIFICANT OFFERING,


IT IS ENOUGH TO DEFEAT AN OPPONENT FROM 10 METERS AWAY.

UGH!
Is this magic?!
How can this be...

Defensive magic has this many uses?
You can't even think about attacking Hakaze.
Getting close to her is impossible.
Hanemura, if you truly are the real deal,
This level of magic should be easy for you to overcome.
ゴゴゴ
ドガッ
Do you have what it takes to kill me and change the will of the "Tree of Beginnings"?

EVER SINCE THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" APPEARED,
MANY PEOPLE HAVE STARTED TO WORSHIP IT.



ISN'T THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" YOUR REVERED GOD?
DOESN'T IT BOTHER YOU? HAVING ALL THESE PEOPLE TAKE YOUR PLACE AS THE MAIN WORSHIPPERS

MANY CULTS HAVE ALREADY STARTED TO FORM.
IT IS STARTING TO BECOME A RELIGION.

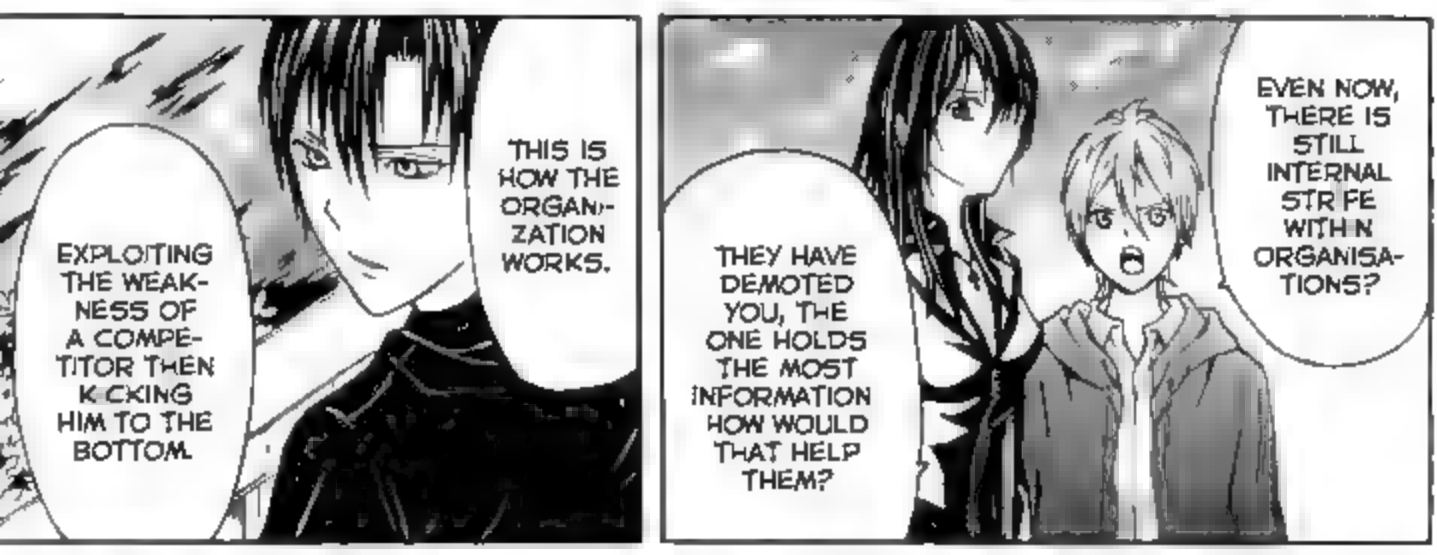
AT SOME POINT IN TIME, THE WORLD WILL CHANGE SO THAT NOT EVEN WE OF THE KUSARIBE CLAN WOULD RECEIVE ANY BLESSINGS FROM IT.
THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" HAS NOT RESPONDED TO ANY OF THEIR PRAYERS.
IT MIGHT BECOME A PROBLEM.
HOWEVER, THESE PEOPLE ARE NOT THAT EASY TO SUPPRESS.
REGARDLESS,
THOSE WHO COULD BE MOBILISED HAVE BEEN SENT TO GATHER INFORMATION IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD.
THE "REVIVAL RITUAL" WAS EXTREMELY TAXING.
MANY OF MY MEN ARE UNABLE TO USE MAGIC FOR THE TIME BEING.
THAT REMINDS ME, SAMON.
WHERE HAVE THE REST OF THE KUSARIBE CLANSMEN GONE?
.....
THE ONES THAT I CAN USE ARE STILL FAR TOO FEW.
THAT ASIDE, THEY ALSO HAVE THEIR PERSONAL LIVES OUTSIDE OF CLAN AFFAIRS.

NO.
HAVE THEY COME UP WITH ANY SOLUTIONS?
AND THE GOVERNMENT?
THEY ARE AFRAID OF AGGRAVATING THE SITUATION.
THAT IS A STANDARD PROCEDURE FOR THEM.
ON THE SURFACE THEY ARE RESEARCHING THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" AND THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN."
IF YOU KNOW ALL THIS,
WHY AREN'T YOU DOING ANYTHING ABOUT IT?
HOWEVER THEY HAVE NOTHING PLANNED AND ARE JUST HOPING THAT NO SERIOUS EVENTS WILL OCCUR
THE ONE WHO TOOK CONTROL OF THE ARMY AND FORCED IT INTO ACTION...
IN THE END, HE LED THE ARMY TO ITS DEMISE AND FAILED TO PREVENT THE CATASTROPHE FROM HAPPENING.
HEY, MAHIRO.
DO YOU THINK SUCH A PERSON WOULD STILL HOLD ANY POWER?

I DO UNDER-STAND.
SINCE IT'S LIKE THIS...

SFX: ANGRY

HE HAS PRACTICALLY ZERO INFLUENCE WITHIN THE ORGANISA-TION NOW.
THEY HAVE EXCLUDED HIM FROM EVERYTHING.
HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF THE INCIDENT, HE IS FORCED TO RESEARCH AND COLLECT INFORMATION REGARDING THE IRON SICK-NESS... IS A LOW RANK MISSION.
TAKUMI WAS ONE OF THE BEST IN THE ORGANI-ZATION THE YOUNGEST DETECTIVE.


THIS IS HOW THE ORGANI-ZATION WORKS.
EXPLOITING THE WEAK-NESS OF A COMPE-TITOR THEN KICKING HIM TO THE BOTTOM.
THEY HAVE DEMOTED YOU, THE ONE HOLDS THE MOST INFORMATION HOW WOULD THAT HELP THEM?
EVEN NOW, THERE IS STILL INTERNAL STRIFE WITHIN ORGANISA-TIONS?

INSTEAD, THOSE IN THE GOVERNMENT ARE AFRAID OF BEING DEMOTED LIKE ME AND HAVE THEREFORE IGNORED MAGIC ENTIRELY.
NO ONE HAS EVEN CONSIDERED THE POS-SIBILITY OF THE ORGA-NIZATION CRUMBLING

I AM ONLY VOLUNTARILY HELPING HIM.
I AM STILL UNABLE TO CHANGE HIS POSITION IN ANY WAY.
ALTHOUGH THERE ARE COMPETENT PEOPLE WITHIN THE ORGANISATION GIVING TAKUMI INFORMATION,
HE IS NO LONGER ABLE TO OPERATE AS FREELY AS HE WAS BEFORE.
IT MAY NOT BE ALL THAT BAD.
THE KUSARIBE CLAN HAS ALWAYS TRIED TO AVOID LETTING MAGIC FALL UNDER THE GOVERNMENT'S CONTROL.
IF THESE PEOPLE ARE STILL IN THE GOVERNMENT, WE WON'T BE ABLE TO WORK WITH THEM.
So in other words, co-operating with a low ranking person,
Has no particular benefits?
AS WELL AS THE DEMOTED LOW RANKER,
ALL THESE UNRELIABLE PEOPLE ARE MY COMRADES NOW?
THE WEAKENED KUSARIBE CLAN,
...ALL SAID,
IN THE END,

These people are more unreliable than I thought...
THAT IS ONE WAY TO LOOK AT IT.

I will wait until Aika's killer is found...

ニヤ

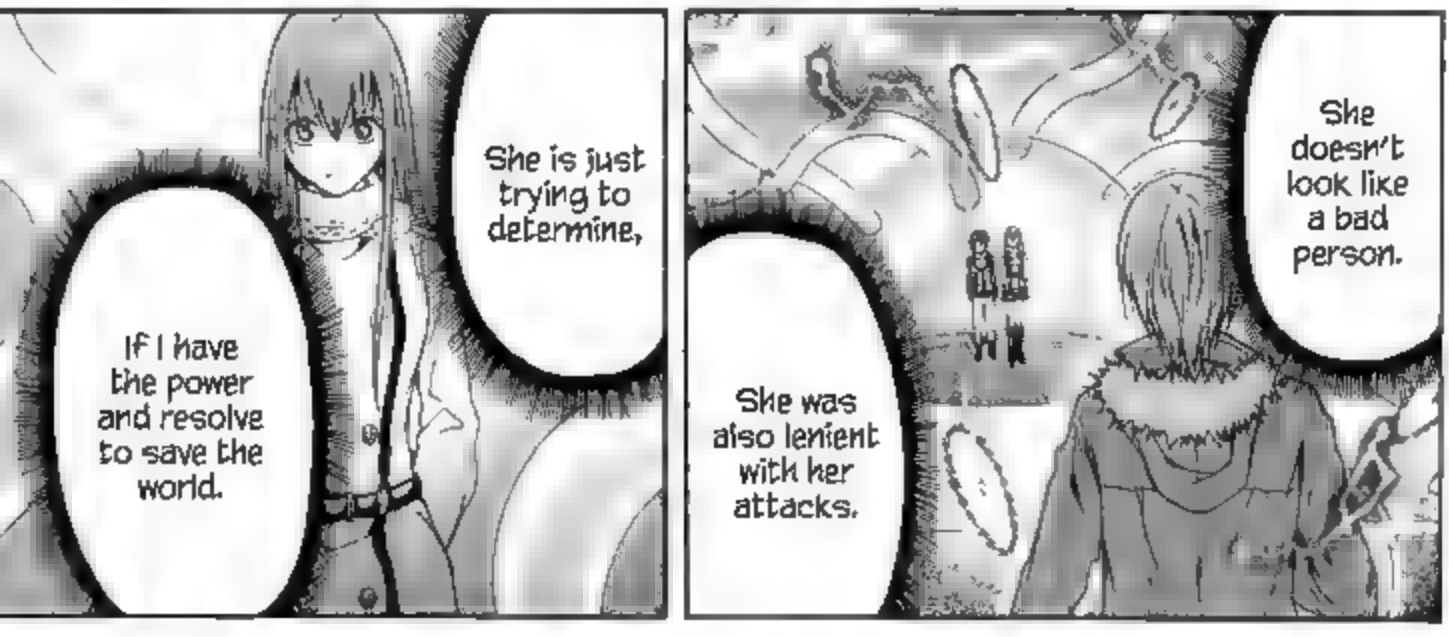
...Then again, I would be able to do whatever I want.
This isn't an unwholesome situation.

SFX: GRINS

I will not allow it.
If you people decide to interfere,

WHAT...

Since I can use "magic,"
That's right. "Magic."
These attacks shouldn't stop me!
SO YOU FINALLY REMEMBERED HOW TO COUNTER MY MAGIC?
ｱｱｱｱｱｱ

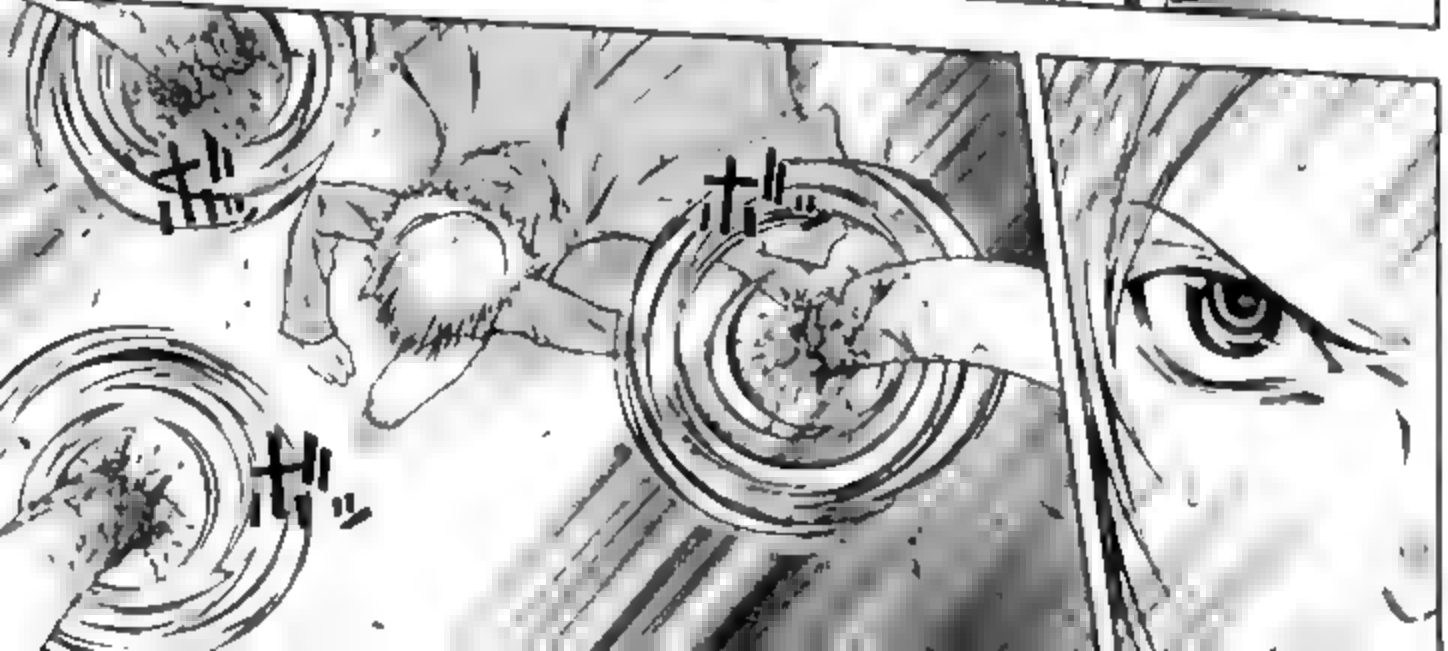

If I have the power and resolve to save the world.
She is just trying to determine,
She was also lenient with her attacks.
She doesn't look like a bad person.

So this is what a real trial is like!
She is trying to guide me.
She is probably not an enemy.

This should be a fair battle.
I doubt she would try to kill me since I am not an enemy.
If I can't face this, how can I possibly save the world!
I have no reason to hold back.
It seems to be flowing in my genes.
My true powers are starting to awaken...
My resolve to fight is getting stronger.
Back then I was having difficulty using magic. Now I am starting to feel the power.
スゥ——
SFX: DEEP BREATH

COUNTER-
ATTACK!

SO,
HOW FAR SHOULD I LET YOU RUN?



THIS WON'T WORK ON ME AGAIN!
SLICE!

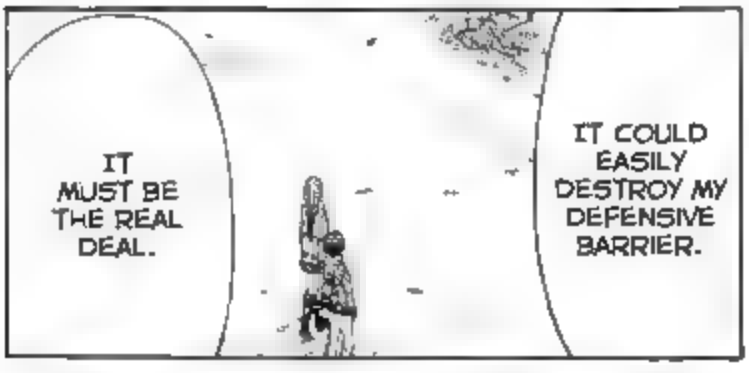
!!
Her arm was cut into pieces?!
HAKAZE-SAN!

NO...
WOAH.
YOUR HAND...
HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN...
DO YOU THINK,
THAT I WOULD NOT HAVE THE POWER TO RESTORE AN ARM?
DON'T PANIC JUST BECAUSE YOU CUT OFF MY ARM.
YOU ARE WEAK.

IN THE END I REALLY DID BREAK HIS ARM.
HAH...
I ONLY INTENDED IT AS JOKE...
SFX. STILL
SORRY.
I DIDN'T MEAN TO SCARE YOU.
PLEASE DON'T SCARE ME AGAIN,
HAKAZE-SAN...
ALL I HAVE TO DO IS CONFINE THE BLOOD FLOW TO A SMALL REGION ON MY RIGHT ARM.
IF MY ARM GETS DESTROYED, I'LL JUST USE MAGIC TO RECOVER IT
YOU LET HIS ATTACK HIT YOU ON PURPOSE?
YES.

THIS MAGIC IS UNDOUBTEDLY THAT OF THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN."

I HAD TO TEST H-S REACTION.


IT MUST BE THE REAL DEAL.
IT COULD EASILY DESTROY MY DEFENSIVE BARRIER.

THIS PERSON IS NOT A MURDERER.
HOWEVER, AS YOU CAN SEE,

IN OTHER WORDS,
HE'S NOT AIKA'S KILLER?

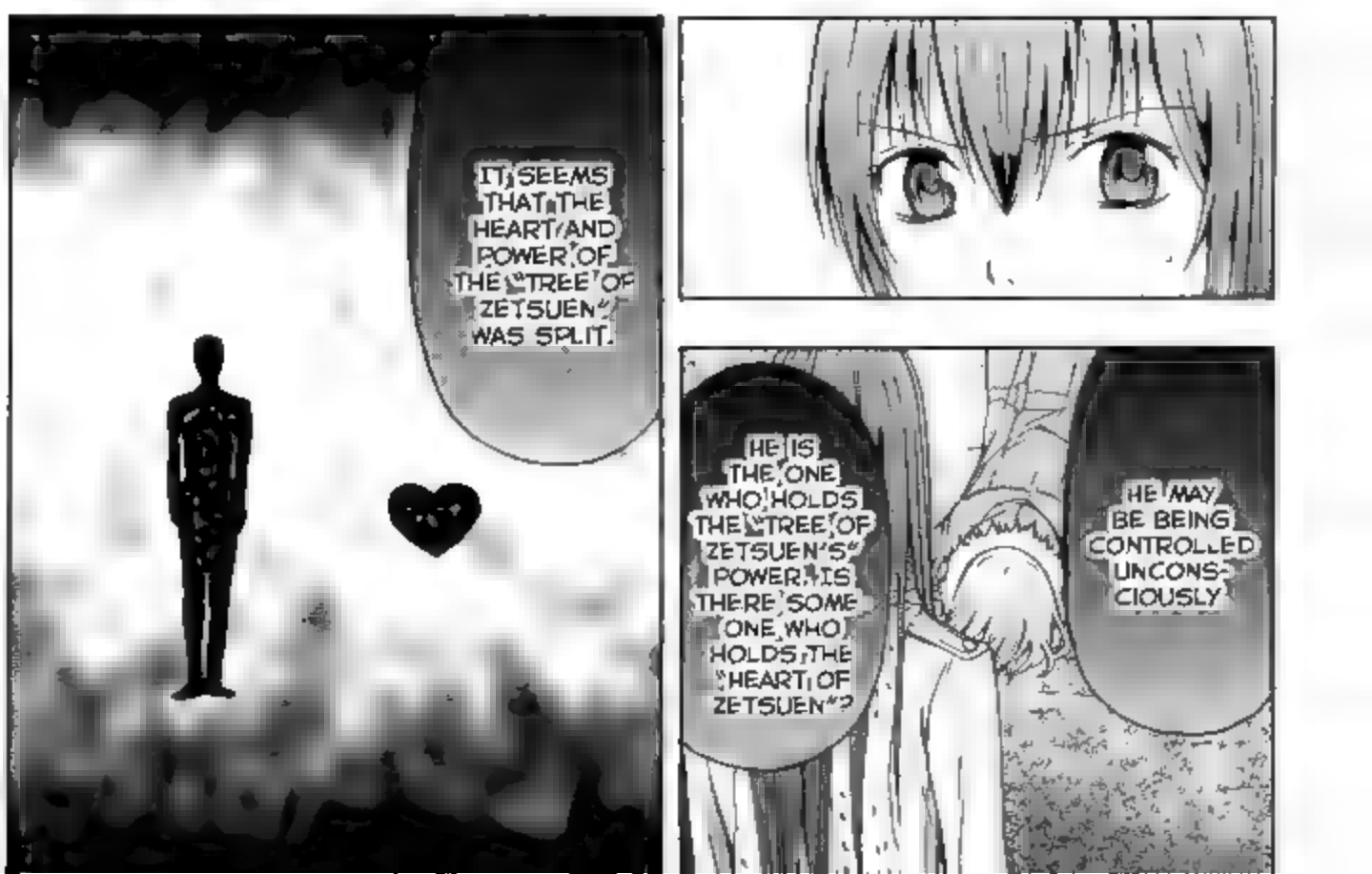
HE DOES NOT HAVE THE MENTAL CAPACITY TO KILL.
IF HE WAS, HE WOULD NOT HAVE BEHAVED LIKE THAT.

HE IS REALLY WEAK FOR A "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN."

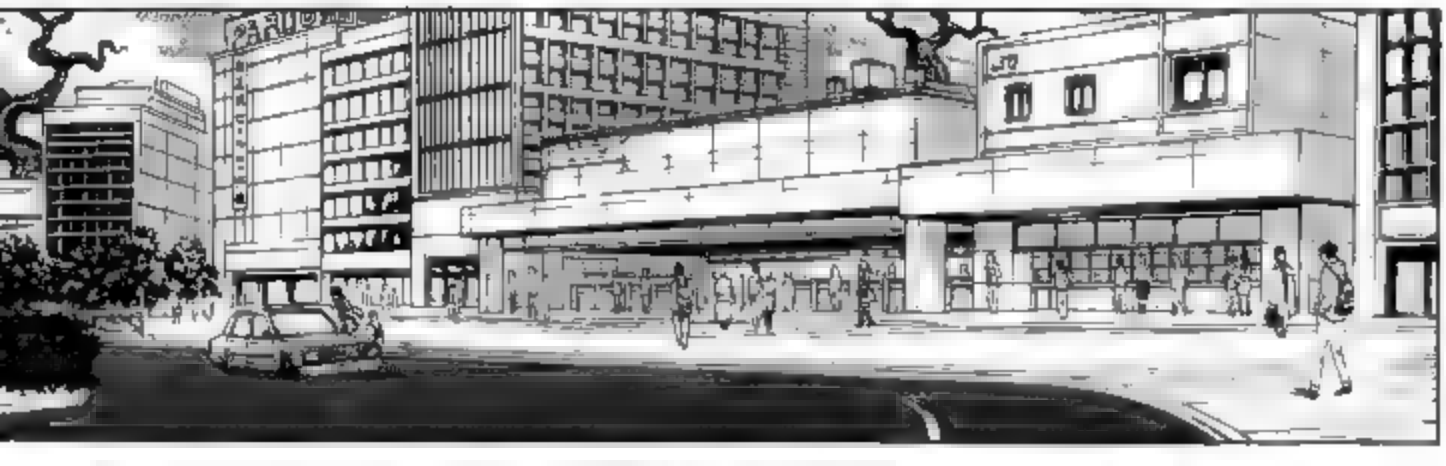
ASIDE FROM HIM,
ARE THERE ANY OTHER "MAGICIANS OF ZETSUEN"?
I'M STILL NOT SURE.
I CAN'T DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT HE WAS ACTING. HE MAY HAVE A DUAL PERSONALITY.
THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN" HAS BEEN SEALED FOR A VERY LONG TIME.
グイ…
EVEN IF ONLY A SMALL PART OF IT WAS UNSEALED,
I DON'T BELIEVE IT HAS ENOUGH POWER TO CREATE MAGICIANS THAT COULD KILL ME.
THE MAGICIANS WOULD PROBABLY BE WEAKLINGS.
ポツ…
フ…

TELL HIM THAT WE HAVE LOCATED THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN."
AND THAT HE WISHES TO GO WITH THEM.
YOSHINO.
CONTACT TAKUMI AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

LET US MAKE PREPARATIONS BEFORE HANDING HIM OVER.
IN A WAY, WE ARE HELPING HIM.
IT'S BETTER LIKE THIS.
WON'T THERE BE A PROBLEM?


IT SEEMS THAT THE HEART AND POWER OF THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN" WAS SPLIT.
HE IS THE ONE WHO HOLDS THE "TREE OF ZETSUEN'S" POWER. IS THERE SOMEONE WHO HOLDS THE "HEART OF ZETSUEN"?
HE MAY BE BEING CONTROLLED UNCONSCIOUSLY

COMPARED TO THAT, HIS MAGIC POWER IS INSIGNIFICANT.
TO HAVE THE RESOLVE TO DESTROY EVERYTHING THE "HEART OF ZETSUEN"...



YES.

TO WAKE ME UP?
SO YOU'RE TELLING ME THAT YOU WENT BEHIND HAKAZE'S AND YOSHINO'S BACK.

WE HAD AGREED THAT UNTIL WE FIND AIKA'S KILLER,
YOU WERE TO BE LEFT IN A SLEEPING STATE.

HOWEVER, WE NEEDED YOU ON OUR TEAM.
THEREFORE, WE WOKE YOU UP WITHOUT THEIR PERMISSION.

THAT ASSHOLE.
DOES HE HATE THAT PROMISE HE MADE WITH ME THAT MUCH?

YOSHINO'S PLAN WAS TO LET YOU SLEEP FOR AT LEAST A YEAR.

THAT HE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO CARE FOR ME AND HAKAZE AT THE SAME TIME.
FORGET IT. HE MUST HAVE REALIZED,

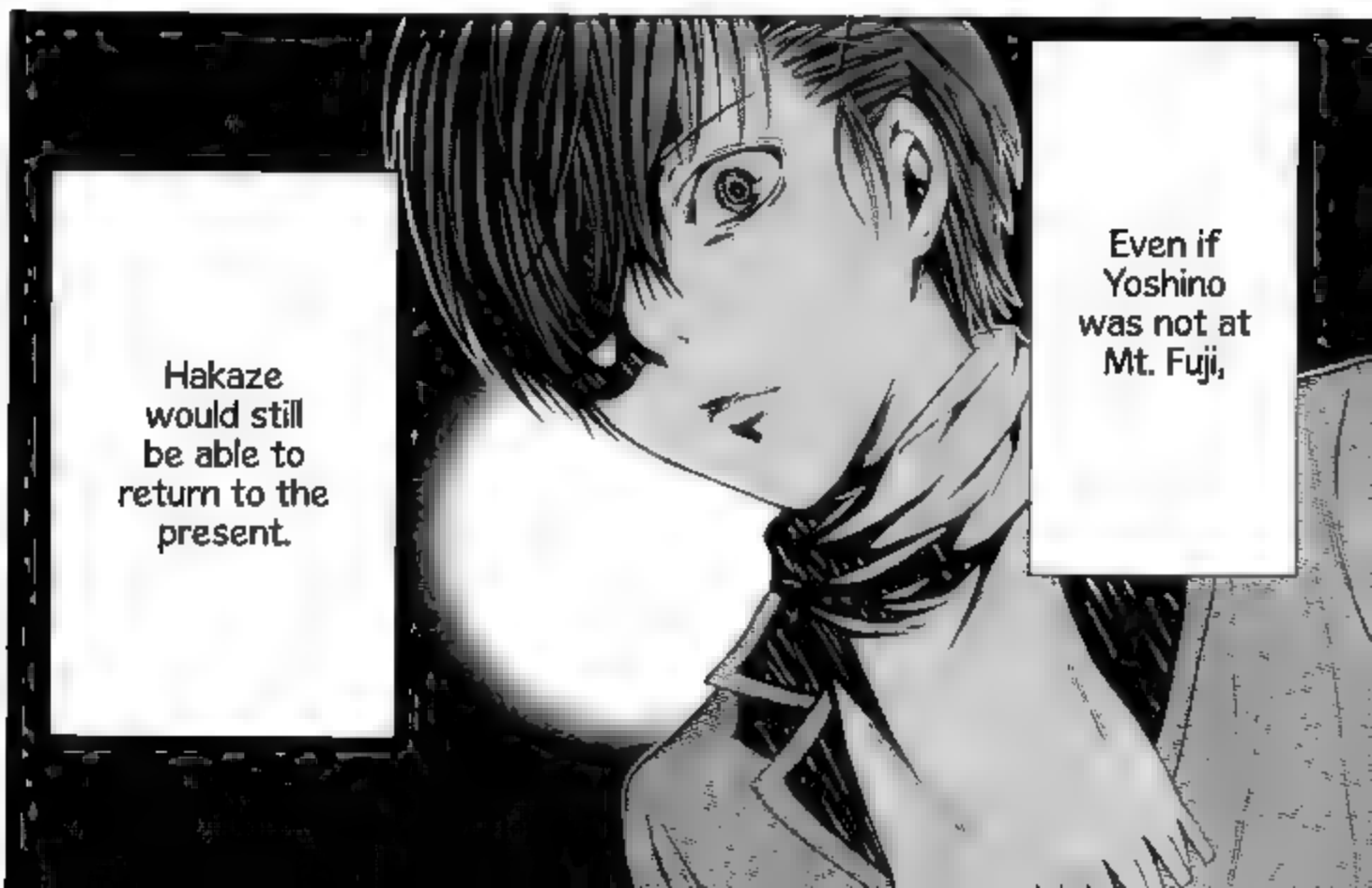
DO NOT MAKE CONTACT WITH ANY OF THEM FOR THE MOMENT.
YOU HAVE TO KEEP YOUR ACTIONS A SECRET FROM THEM.
ALRIGHT.
Even so,
You still trust Yoshino despite all this.
I KNOW OF YOUR PROMISE, BUT PLEASE BE PATIENT FOR NOW.
IS IT ABOUT YOUR SISTER'S BOYFRIEND?
I HAVE SOMETHING,
THAT I NEED TO SETTLE WITH YOSHINO, FACE-TO-FACE.
IT SEEMS LIKE EVERYTHING HAS GONE AS YOSHINO PLANNED.

WE DIDN'T THINK THAT HE'D TRUST YOSHINO THAT MUCH.
WE WEREN'T EXPECTING THIS.
HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO KEEP THE POSSIBILITY OF "THAT" FROM MAHIRO?
HE WILL FIND OUT ON HIS OWN ONE DAY.
YES.
I CAN DETERMINE HIS RESOLVE TO KILL YOSHINO...
WHICH IS WHY, THROUGH THIS TEST,
THESE PRO-BLEMS,
ARE ENDLESS.

YOSHINO TAKIGAWA...
HE MAY ACTUALLY BE THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN."
I have been thinking about the boy, Yoshino Takigawa...
His resolve may be against the "Tree of Beginnings."
Now that he is together with our princess and becoming a great influence on her,
He could cause her to destroy the "Tree of Beginnings."

Back at Mt. Fuji, I was already suspicious about that boy.
It is hard to believe that the "Tree of Beginnings" allowed such a thing to happen.

But looking at it now...
And rescued Hakaze.
On the surface, it seems he followed the will of the "Tree of Beginnings"


Hakaze would still be able to return to the present.
Even if Yoshino was not at Mt. Fuji,

EVEN IF YOSHINO DID NOT INTERFERE WITH THE DEAL I MADE WITH MAHIRO,
I STILL WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO FIND THE KILLER OF MAHIRO'S SISTER AMONG THE KUSARIBE CLAN.
SO,
EVEN WITHOUT YOSHINO, IF THE KILLER COULD NOT BE IDENTIFIED AT THAT TIME,
THEREFORE, THE DEAL WAS DOOMED FROM THE START.
HAKAZE WOULD STILL BE ABLE TO CONCLUDE THAT THE KILLER WAS A *MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN.*
THE SITUATION WOULD THEN BE REVERSED AS WELL.
THE CONCLUSION WOULD STILL CAUSE YOU AND MAHIRO TO BE ENEMIES.

MAHIRO WOULD COOPERATE WITH HAKAZE ONCE MORE...
ONCE THAT HAPPENS,

BOTH WAYS WOULD CAUSE HAKAZE TO RETURN TO THE PRESENT.

OR USED THE TALISMAN.

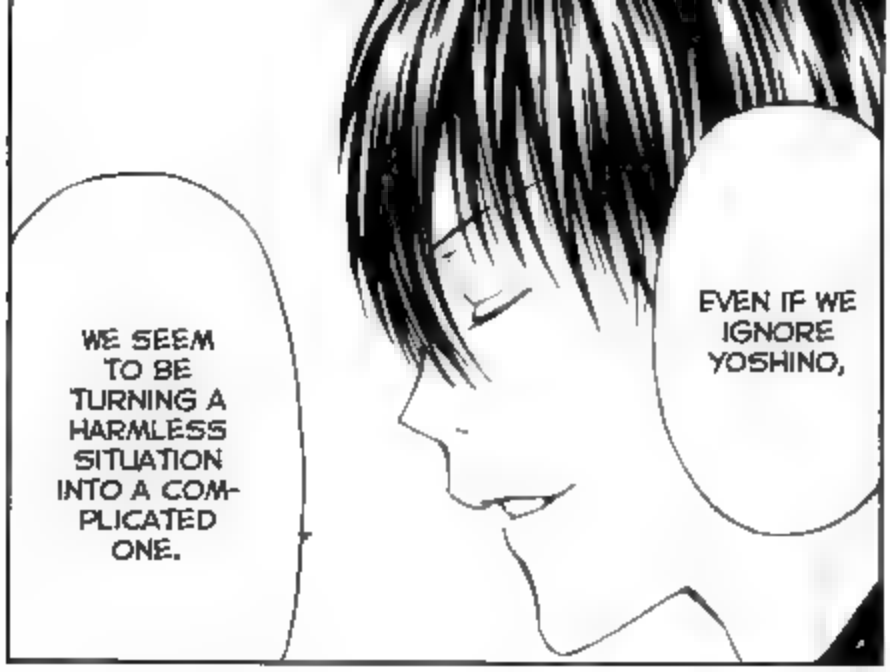
EITHER HE WOULD HAVE DEDUCED THE SOLUTION TO THE "CAGE OF TIME" HIMSELF,

...EXACTLY.

EVEN WITHOUT YOSHINO, EVERYTHING WOULD STILL HAVE HAPPENED NORMALLY
SINCE THE DEAL WAS DOOMED FROM THE START,

THE DOORWAY FOR HAKAZE'S RETURN TO THE PRESENT WAS ALREADY OPEN.
EVEN IF YOSHINO DIDN'T DO ANYTHING,

THEREFORE, THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" DID NOT CONSIDER THAT BOY TO BE A THREAT.
HOWEVER, HIS PRESENT ACTIONS,
HAVE CAUSED THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" TO LOSE ITS CURRENT ADVANTAGE.

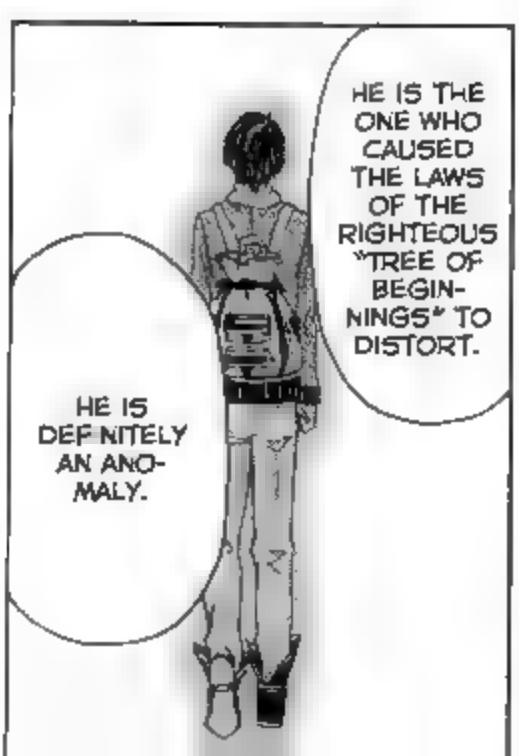

EVEN IF WE IGNORE YOSHINO,
WE SEEM TO BE TURNING A HARMLESS SITUATION INTO A COMPLICATED ONE.

A...

NOW, EVEN OUR PRINCESS IS IN LOVE WITH HIM.

THIS HAS CAUSED THE ALREADY RESOLVED SITUATION TO BECOME MORE CONVOLUTED.

IT MADE US SUSPICIOUS OF THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS."


HE IS THE ONE WHO CAUSED THE LAWS OF THE RIGHTEOUS "TREE OF BEGINNINGS" TO DISTORT.
HE IS DEFINITELY AN ANOMALY.

THAT BOY,
ALTHOUGH HE SEEMS NORMAL AT FIRST GLANCE,

THIS S DEFINITELY AGAINST THE WILL OF THE "TREE OF BEGINNINGS."

ALL OF THIS.
POINTS TO HIM AS THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN."

NO MATTER HOW SUS-PICIOUS YOSHINO SEEMS,
WE ARE UNABLE TO PULL THE PRINCESS TO OUR SIDE FOR THE TIME BEING.

WE MAY EVEN LOSE HER TRUST IF WE DECIDE TO TELL HER.

EVEN IF WE WERE TO ASK THE PRINCESS TO CON-FIRM IT,
SHE WOULD NOT BELIEVE US.
OUR SUSPICIONS WON'T LOOK SO GOOD ON A GIRL WHO IS IN LOVE.

YES? HELLO

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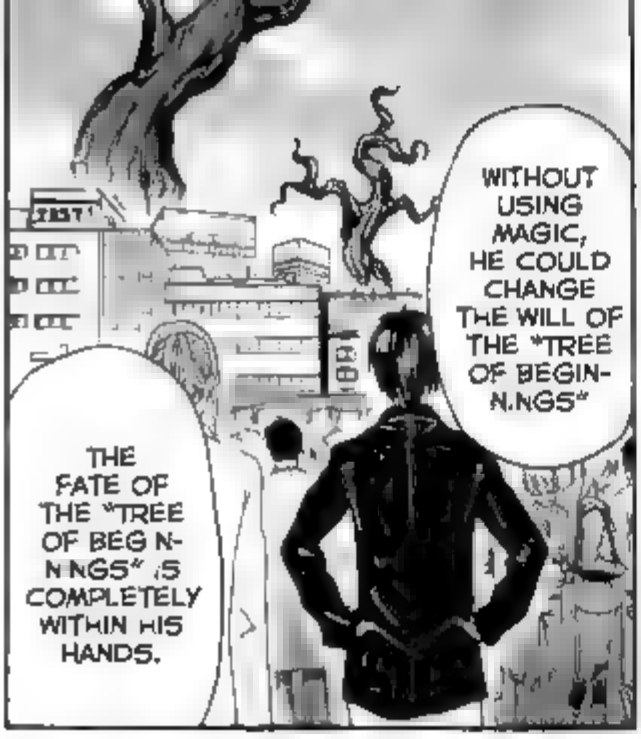
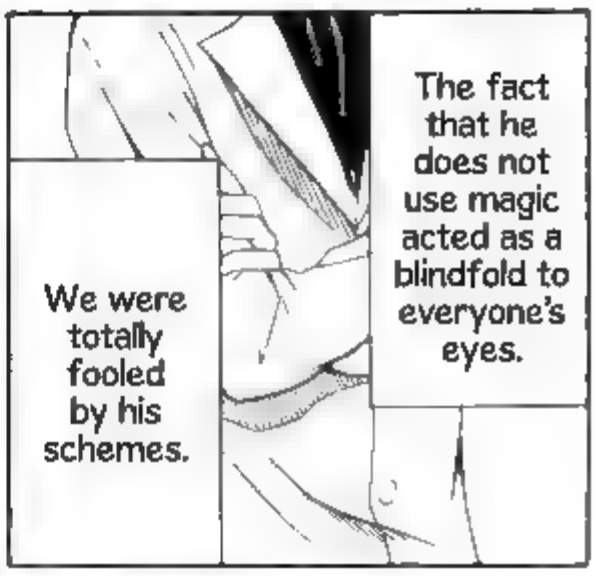

WITHOUT USING MAGIC, HE COULD CHANGE THE WILL OF THE "TREE OF BEGIN-N.NGS"
THE FATE OF THE "TREE OF BEG N-N NGS" .S COMPLETELY WITHIN HIS HANDS.

IF YOSHINO .S THE "MAGICIAN OF ZETSUEN,"
THE SITUATION COULD NOT BE MORE PERFECT FOR HIM.

The "Tree of Zetsuen" may not be as strong in magic powers compared to the "Tree of Beginnings."
But its intelligence is higher than that of the "Tree of Beginnings."

OR...


We were totally fooled by his schemes.
The fact that he does not use magic acted as a blindfold to everyone's eyes.

...There-fore...

Can we really conclude that Mahiro's sister,
Was killed by Takigawa Yoshino?

That because of her death,
Those two were able to be linked up to these events.
.....

HEY.
ARE YOU GUYS FREE RIGHT NOW?
WHAT HAPPENED?

VOLUME 4 /END.

TO BE CONTINUED IN VOLUME 5

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